

**Making it Work: Aspects of Marriage, Motherhood and
Money-Earning Among White South African Women
1960-1990**

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Abstract

This study provides a feminist perspective on aspects of change in white women's lives in South Africa between 1960 and 1990. Changing patterns of women's work, where work encompasses unpaid domestic labour as well as paid employment outside the home, are traced. The different ways in which women have combined their socially defined obligations as wives and mothers, as employees or employers, are considered. The primary sources used include open-ended interviews with women, magazines and the publications of women's organisations.

The period 1960-1973 was one in which most white women left the paid labour force after marrying. Towards the end of the period, in the context of a booming economy and a perceived shortage of skilled white labour, more white wives were remaining in employment after marriage. The media, women's organisations, the state, big business and white male workers were addressing, in different ways, the conflict between white wives entering paid employment and the necessity to protect traditional values whereby 'good' wives stayed at home. 1974-1984 saw large and increasing numbers of white wives taking up paid work, both part-time and full-time. The period saw employed wives becoming increasingly commonplace, while the range of occupations open to them expanded. Observing that most remained in the lower levels of corporate hierarchies, women's organisations focused on eliminating the 'glass ceilings' said to block women's entry to higher paid positions. By 1985-1990 women were encouraged to be ambitious, assertive and to strive for self-fulfilment through their careers. The conflict of trying to achieve in the male dominated business world, combined with a sexual division of labour that persisted in defining the home and the family as women's work, saw many women leave the work place to start up home-based businesses.

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Introduction

This study began by attempting to trace the changing patterns of white women's employment in South Africa since 1960. It ended by focusing as strongly on marriage and motherhood as it did on different patterns of income generation. It became increasingly obvious that women's choice of employment was inextricably intertwined with the expectation or actuality of marriage and motherhood. Today, just as thirty years ago, the institution of marriage and its socially accepted corollary of child bearing and rearing, dominates and licenses the choices of most white women about other parts of their lives.

Sources play a major part in the shaping of any historical study. For a study focusing on women this poses particular problems: South African historical records contain, for the most part, a tale of the past seen through male eyes and recorded by male pens. These difficulties have been encountered elsewhere by several analysts.¹ Spender sums up the main problems quite succinctly:

Women have 'made' just as much 'history' as men but it has not been codified and transmitted; women have probably done just as much writing as men but it has not been preserved; and women, no doubt, have generated as many meanings as men, but these have not survived. Where the meanings of women have been discontinuous with the male version of reality they have not been retained.²

¹ See, for example, S. Rowbotham, *Hidden From History* (London: Pluto Press, 1973); D. Spender, *Women of Ideas and What Men Have Done to Them* (London: Pandora Press, 1992); J. Wallach Scott, "The Problem of Invisibility" in S. Jay Kleinberg (ed), *Retrieving Women's History* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1988).

² D. Spender, *Man Made Language* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 53.

Even so, a lot may be learnt simply by focusing on the omissions and silences inherent in such records. The careers guidance booklets and pamphlets, for example, generally revealed more in terms of what they did not say, particularly during the earlier period. Publications by women's organisations provided information about issues affecting particular groups of white women at particular times. The Business and Professional Women's Club publications reveal much about working women during the 1960s, while, by the late 1970s, the newsletters of the Women's Legal Status Committee revealed something of the issues concerning some white women.

The vast bulk of the secondary literature reflects a similar bias, containing similar silences. From the point of view of the overwhelming majority of those empowered to conduct, finance and identify topics worthy of research, white women simply did not exist until the late 1960s. Their appearance then, as the focus of a few studies in the early 1970s, was directly linked to the needs of a capitalist state intent on maintaining white economic supremacy in a patriarchal³ society; most of the research was aimed at finding ways of pulling white housewives into low level positions in the labour force in order to alleviate a perceived shortage of skilled labour.⁴ A central tenet in this work was the contemporary understanding of a white woman's role as mother and wife, and

³ The term patriarchy is used in this paper to describe the unequal power relationships between men and women that provide the foundations for women's subordination. Use of the term does not imply that the specifics of these power inequalities are either unchanging or universal.

⁴ See, for example, D. Wessels, *Manpower Requirements and the Utilisation of White Women: the Views of 50 Employers in 9 Major Industry Groups* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council (hereafter HSRC), 1975).

how this could be reconciled with paid work without affecting the status and position of white men. From the mid-1970s, a few conferences organised around 'women's issues' had seen some gathering together of research centering around women, but this work, even in the 1990s, tends to be marginal to 'mainstream' studies.⁵

But if there is little in the secondary or traditional written primary sources that recognises women as part of human history, there is a great deal that is unrecorded, hidden in women's memories. For the purposes of this study, the written records could be augmented by interviewing white women. Providing space for the recovery of women's voices and experiences allows for the construction of a different understanding of the past, one that recognises that the existing version is neither complete nor adequate. The interviews, while organised around a particular set of themes, were open-ended, allowing the interviewees space to articulate what they considered to have been important in their lives.

As individual women remembered the events of their lives, recalling the problems and challenges, successes and disappointments, most commented that "things were different then". Yet these differences barely feature as a focus of South African research during the 1970s and 1980s. White women's lives remain, for the most part, hidden in the shadows cast by white men. A few exceptions appeared, reflecting white women's entry into men's world of work, primarily because as more went out to work it became increasingly difficult to

⁵ An International Convention of Women was held in Grahamstown in 1975; the Women's Legal Status Committee conference took place in Johannesburg in 1980, while the Women and Gender in Southern Africa conference was held in Durban in 1991.

ignore them. Even so, it was still possible to expel them from any 'serious' analysis. 1978 saw Stopforth and Schlemmer remove the women who so insistently surfaced in their study, on the grounds that their presence obstructed a clearer understanding of changing trends in the status of different occupations.⁶ More significantly perhaps, 1986 saw the publication of a study by a female academic examining white women's aspirations towards power.⁷ Concluding that white women "felt strong and powerful through helping others and through vicarious identification with the activities of their husbands and children",⁸ the report effectively reinforced the stereotype of white women finding fulfilment in the nurturing and caring activities assigned them by patriarchal traditions and customs. It would seem, on the surface, that little had changed since the 1960s.

But, according to the interviewees, while much of the present remained continuous with the past, a great deal had changed. In order to flesh out their memories, and in the absence of much archival material, women's magazines proved extremely useful.⁹ A variety of magazines directed at fairly well

⁶ P. Stopforth and L. Schlemmer, *Prestige and Socio-economic Rank Order of Occupations and Occupational Groupings Among Whites in South Africa* (University of Natal, Durban: Centre for Applied Social Sciences, 1978), p. 29. A far more illuminating approach might have been to examine the effect of large numbers of women entering particular fields on each field's status.

⁷ R. Hirschowitz, *The Power Motive and its Expression in a Group of English Speaking South African Women* (Pretoria: HSRC, 1986).

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁹ A number of feminist analysts have used women's magazines as a source. See, for example, G. Lerner, "New Approaches to The Study of Women in American History" in B. Carroll (ed), *Liberating Women's History* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1976), p. 353.

educated, English speaking and primarily urban white women were used. Changing assumptions inherent in new conceptualisations of the meaning of marriage, motherhood and the place of paid employment in a woman's life permeate these magazines.

The view that the media are powerful socialisation agents has been expressed by a number of social theorists,¹⁰ and is connected to the way in which the media inform their audiences of legitimate behaviour in particular situations through the use of articles, short stories, editorials, interviews and advice columns; the mass media generally reflect the prevailing consensus and contemporary biases of their existing audiences. Yet while 'preaching' runs the risk of alienating an audience and losing markets, successful magazines do attempt to 'educate' their readers. Jane Raphaely, currently editor of *Cosmopolitan*, and editor of *Fair Lady* from 1965 to 1984, argued that a primary function of women's magazines was and is to educate and inform their audiences.¹¹ Thus women's magazines endeavour to offer constructive and practical information on a variety of issues that are likely to arise in the life of the reader.¹² As these issues changed so the information published adapted; tracing new patterns in magazine content can thus highlight adjustments in aspects of contemporary norms and standards.

¹⁰ See K. Danzinger, *Socialisation* (London: Penguin, 1971); R.D. Wimmer and J.R. Dominick, *Mass Media Research: An Introduction* (California: Wadsworth, 1987); T.R. Williams, *Socialisation* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1983); D.A. Goslin, *Handbook of Socialisation Theory and Research* (Chicago: Rand McNally College, 1969); A. Oakley, *Towards a New Society: Sex, Gender and Society* (London: Templesmith, 1972).

¹¹ J. Raphaely, cited in R. Cooke, "The Role of Women's Magazines in South Africa - Ideology vs Message" (Honours Project, Department of Sociology, University of Cape Town, 1991), Appendix 2, Transcript 3, p. 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

The early 1960s saw South African women's magazines by and large opposed to the idea of married women re-entering employment. Existing magazines, such as *Femina and Woman's Life*, with male editors, predicted nothing but disaster should women leave the home in order to take up paid employment.¹³ But in 1965 a new magazine, *Fair Lady*, appeared on South African shelves.

Reflecting overseas trends, whereby a few women were beginning to write about women's lives, *Fair Lady*, an English medium magazine, was endowed with a married woman as its editor. Most, if not all, of the editorial staff were also women, and several of these were married. Their very existence contradicted contemporary conventional patterns: a wife's moral and ethical duty lay, supposedly, in 'choosing' the home and suppressing her own aims and ambitions in favour of those of her children and husband.

But if *Fair Lady* defended women's right to paid employment through the 1960s and early 1970s, it took great pains to stress that a wife must be extremely careful not to let her work affect her husband and family in any way.

Responsible wives, article after article emphasised, would give up work¹⁴ before their families started suffering. But as white women migrated into the work

¹³ See editorials, *Femina and Woman's Life* 18 February 1960; 13 September 1962; 19 December 1963; 2 December 1965; 21 September 1967; 6 August 1970.

¹⁴ The whole concept of the modern day 'working wife' is, however, a misnomer. Women and wives have always worked, at a variety of tasks. One of the notable reformulations associated with the rise of capitalism has been the way in which the very term 'work' has been reinterpreted to imply only paid labour, thus excluding most of the work of women from recognition. See L. Beneria, "Accounting for Women's Work", in L. Beneria, (ed.) *Women and Development: The Sexual Division of Labour in Rural Societies* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982).

place during the 1960s and 1970s, stereotypical ideas of what constituted a 'real' woman began to change.¹⁵ During the 1960s, truly feminine women were frequently conceptualised, both in the magazines and in more academic writings, as passive, submissive and self-sacrificing. Men, on the other hand, were active, assertive and self-fulfilled. Any woman deviating from the feminine stereotype could only do so by adopting masculine traits, which clearly brought into question her feminine status.

Internationally accepted stereotypes of women, based on unsubstantiated biological determinism, informed much of the work of South African journalists and academics. Pre-existing biases went unquestioned as the academy measured, explicated and codified the traits associated with masculinity and femininity. Since the initial premise of many was that "a feminine sex role identity is significantly aligned to dependence whereas a masculine sex role identity is significantly aligned to independence",¹⁶ the inevitable conclusion was that women aspiring to any form of independence were 'unnatural'.¹⁷ During the 1960s and 1970s, the teachings and writings of South African 'experts' (bolstered by metropolitan theorists) reinforced contemporary opinions as

¹⁵ B. Ehrenreich and D. English, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women* (London: Pluto Press, 1979), p. 258.

¹⁶ J. van Rooyen, *Female Career Commitment: A Lifespan Perspective* (Johannesburg: Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, 1981), p. 231.

¹⁷ In South Africa, J. Bance, too, noted the tendency for success to be considered attractive only "when it was consistent with societal expectations about the sex role" (*Sex Role Stereotyping in Professional Occupations* (Honours project, Psychology, University of Cape Town, 1978)), p. 5. In other words, working women could not be considered successful because success for women could only be achieved by staying at home with their children.

expressed in the media. If women had access to money, and through money economic independence, they could no longer be considered 'real' women.

But as more and more individual women either worked or had friends who worked, so the stereotype of the hard-nosed, masculine career woman began to collapse. By the later 1970s, the biases inherent in the experts' definitions of appropriately feminine behaviour were beginning to be exposed. Since the publication of the *Feminine Mystique*,¹⁸ in 1963, a large and growing body of feminist literature and theory attacking the prejudices of earlier male researchers had appeared, and much of this had made its way into the mass media, both in South Africa and elsewhere.¹⁹ As, internationally, feminist writing and feminist theory grew in strength during the later 1970s and early 1980s, so at least some of these ideas surfaced in the South African media. 1970 had seen one publication hostile to the ideas of the Women's Liberation movement close down,²⁰ and those that remained were generally more accommodating.²¹ By the

¹⁸ B. Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963).

¹⁹ Elaine Morgan's *The Descent of Woman* was serialised by *Fair Lady* during the course of 1972. The views of local feminists were also aired during the 1970s. See, for example, Dr Pamela Sharret, *Fair Lady* 15 May 1974, p. 113; Dolly Maister, *Fair Lady* 12 June 1974, p. 65. Feminist groups such as Durban's Women in Action were publicised favourably (*Fair Lady* 5 March 1975, p. 11), while space was given to detail the extent and nature of discrimination against women (see for example *Fair Lady* 28 February 1979, p. 11).

²⁰ *Femina and Woman's Life* published its final edition in 1970. It is not clear whether or not *Fair Lady*'s success had anything to do with this.

²¹ *Darling*, which superseded *Femina and Woman's Life* in 1970, took a far more positive approach to the idea of married women working, and survived until 1984. *Femina*, introduced in 1982, adopted the focus on working women that had apparently made *Fair Lady* so successful. Older trends lived on, however: *Charmaine*, another new magazine in circulation from 1972 until

mid-1980s, many of the ideas considered revolutionary during the 1960s had become commonplace in the South African media.²² The mid-1980s saw another new magazine appear in South Africa. Until 1984, South Africans wishing to read *Cosmopolitan* had to make do with foreign editions at inflated prices dealing with British or American women. By 1984, its market, specifically working women, or women aspiring to work,²³ had grown large enough to warrant an indigenous South African publication.²⁴

Cooke's 1991 analysis of *Fair Lady* and *Cosmopolitan* suggests that, in 1991 at least, *Fair Lady* saw its role as one of helping women become satisfied and content with their own lives.²⁵ *Cosmopolitan*, she argues approvingly, is focused on tolerance of other lifestyles, and on challenging women to take charge of their own lives.²⁶ Yet telling women that they must 'help themselves' implies that many of women's problems are of their own making, that the solutions are women's responsibility. Ballaster et al's assessment of British magazines - "that they cannot offer political resolutions to what they consistently

1982, simply dismissed anything to do with working women as irrelevant to its readership.

²² For example by the mid-1980s *Femina*, *Fair Lady* and *Darling* were actively encouraging women to become more assertive, more ambitious and to strive for individual self-fulfilment.

²³ Jane Raphaely, cited in Cooke, "Women's Magazines" Appendix 2, Transcript 3, p. 1.

²⁴ In 1991 *Cosmopolitan* had readership figures of about 630,000. *Fair Lady* readership figures were estimated at almost one million (Cooke, "Women's Magazines", p. 8).

²⁵ Cooke, "Women's Magazines", p. 26.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

define as 'personal' problems" - could be applied to South African magazines without too much difficulty.²⁷ But if the South African magazines were and are telling white women that relationships with men, children and families are the concern of women rather than men, most of their audience would appear, from the substance of this research, to agree with them.

If South African secondary sources dealing with women and women's lives were conspicuous by their scarcity, several international sources proved more useful. From the mid-1950s a few social analysts had begun to break with convention and strongly to support the right of women to work.²⁸ As early as 1956, writers such as Myrdal and Klein had begun to argue that society should accommodate working wives.²⁹ By 1963 Friedan³⁰ had entered the fray, followed closely by Klein³¹ and Gavron.³² That this was a dramatic breakthrough for women was noted by Spender: for the first time, or so it appeared, women were beginning to write about women's lives.³³

²⁷ J. R. Ballaster, M. Beetham, E. Frazer and S. Hebron, *Women's Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and the Woman's Magazine* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 174.

²⁸ This work focused largely on married women. It had long been accepted that unmarried women could work, and widely understood that paid work would be terminated by marriage.

²⁹ A. Myrdal and V. Klein, *Women's Two Roles* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956).

³⁰ B. Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963).

³¹ V. Klein, *Britain's Married Women Workers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965).

³² H. Gavron, *The Captive Wife: Conflicts of Housebound Mothers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

³³ D. Spender, *For The Record* (London: The Women's Press, 1985), p. 7. It must also be noted that women have been writing about women for

In large part, these new female writers were urging a reconceptualisation of women's roles without a concomitant reconceptualisation of those of men. Their arguments rested largely on demographic change rather than feminist theory. Myrdal and Klein, for example, supported married women's right to work on the grounds that, by the middle of the twentieth century, average life-spans had increased substantially. Women had many 'useful' years after their children had left home, and these years would allegedly be well spent in paid employment. Furthermore, by the early 1960s, there were signs, in Britain at least, that women were having smaller families; they could complete child-raising sooner, and so should be allowed to take a job if they wished. Finally, the spectre of widowhood and possible financial ruin could be avoided if older women were prepared to take up employment.³⁴

Analysts such as Klein and Gavron clearly favoured women's entry into paid employment, and argued convincingly that society should accommodate working wives. Yet they did not question, in any substantial way, the social roles assigned women as wives and mothers. Accommodation of working women, they argued, should start with special education for girls, taking into account their future domestic commitments.³⁵ Where women had to work, employers were urged to provide special treatment in terms of "working hours, time off for

centuries, but that most of their work has been buried or lost (Spender, *Women of Ideas*, pp. 3-6).

³⁴ Myrdal & Klein, *Women's Two Roles*, p. 25.

³⁵ Gavron, *The Captive Wife*, p. 144. H. Farmer and M. Bohn, "Home-Career Conflict Reduction and the Level of Career Interest in Women", *Journal of Counselling Psychology* Vol. 17, 1970, also called for special education for girls.

shopping, holidays, special shifts, the provision of day nurseries".³⁶ The assumption that responsibilities for child care and domestic maintenance could remain unchanged if women went out to work was made explicit by Klein:

From the community's point of view women are of great importance both as workers and as wives and mothers, and it would seem necessary to provide them with the facilities to perform both of these functions simultaneously and effectively so that neither their homes nor their jobs suffer unduly from this duality of role.³⁷

If the mid-1960s saw Klein accept the idea that a wife's paid employment was voluntary, while uncritically assessing her personal care of the family and home as compulsory and fulfilling,³⁸ they also saw Friedan launch a dramatic broadside at the latter notion. While Friedan also accepted that domestic matters were women's business, she exposed the myth of the fulfilled and contented housewife, arguing that women should have careers.³⁹

For Friedan, Klein and Gavron, as well as for the magazines, wives who worked would simply add labour force commitments to those in the domestic domain. If Gavron and Klein envisaged changes in employment practices accommodating wives and mothers, while Friedan recommended that women use their wages to employ other women to do their domestic work, all three implicitly agreed that men had no responsibility towards day-to-day unpaid work

³⁶ Klein, *Britain's Married Women Workers*, p. 88.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

³⁹ Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*.

in the home. All three effectively encouraged women to replace one job with two.

By the early 1970s, as larger numbers of women took on the dual load of paid employee and unpaid housewife in Britain and the United States, white working wives had become increasingly socially acceptable. In large part this acceptance was the consequence of the minimal impact an employed wife had on the lives of her husband and children. 'Sympathetic' researchers, arguing that women could have both careers and traditional marriages,⁴⁰ investigated and detailed 'coping mechanisms'.⁴¹ Part-time employment was supposedly the ideal solution to the problem of combining paid work with unpaid housework, although a deteriorating economic climate from the early 1970s saw escalating numbers of women entering the full-time labour force as well. As they did this, so researchers began to consider the consequences for those considered to be the most affected - men. As late as 1985 some analysts were still greatly concerned that working wives had a negative effect on husbands in terms of life and job satisfaction.⁴²

By the mid-1980s, in the context of changing behaviours and standards, and in the light of a wide body of feminist theory from which to draw, the assumptions

⁴⁰ L. Harmon, "Anatomy of Career Commitment in Women", *Journal of Counselling Psychology* Vol. 17, 1970, p. 80.

⁴¹ See for example D. Hall and F. Gordon, "Career Choices of Married Women: Effects on Conflict, Role Behaviour, and Satisfaction", *Journal of Applied Psychology* Vol. 58, No. 1, 1973, p. 48.

⁴² G. L. Staines, K.J. Pottick and D.A. Fudge, "The Effects of Wives' Employment on Husbands' Job and Life Satisfaction", *Psychology of Women Quarterly* Vol. 9, No. 3, 1985, pp. 419 and 423.

and aims of some academics and intellectuals showed signs of change. Economists, sociologists, historians and others were pointing to the silences present in earlier academic works, silences that undermined the value of the research itself. Thus Dex, in 1985, suggested that the dearth of research surrounding women workers meant that men's choices and opportunities could not be properly understood. The omissions surrounding women, she argued, called into question both the legitimacy and the value of earlier studies.⁴³ In a similar vein, Voydanhoff exposed the limitations of analyses that understood unemployment as a male problem, and employment as a female problem.⁴⁴ By the mid-1980s researchers were also investigating why women with jobs and families did not *expect* husbands to share the house work.⁴⁵

The later 1980s saw a number of analysts endeavouring to fill the gaps evident in earlier accounts, and the quantity and depth of research focusing on women in paid employment grew dramatically.⁴⁶ Given the increasing number of self-employed women across the western world since the mid-1980s, several analysts

⁴³ S. Dex, *The Sexual Division of Work* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, Harvester press, 1985), p. 34 & 47. Other researchers also commented on the dearth of research - see R. Goffee and R. Scase, *Women in Charge: The Experiences of Female Entrepreneurs* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985).

⁴⁴ P. Voydanhoff, *Work and Family Life* (Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1987), p. 14.

⁴⁵ N. Rudd and P. McKenry, "Family Influences on the Job Satisfaction of Employed Mothers", *Psychology of Women Quarterly* Vol. 10, 1986, p. 370.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Goffee and Scase, *Women in Charge*; R. Martin and J. Wallace, *Working Women in Recession: Employment, Redundancy and Unemployment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); D. Clutterbuck and M. Devine, *Business Women: Present and Future* (Hong Kong: Macmillan Press, 1987); Voydanhoff, *Work and Family Life*.

at last acknowledged that females, as well as males could be entrepreneurs. Worldwide recession and the incapacity of big business to provide enough jobs, focused research on those who were self-employed; analysts attempted to identify the qualities required to start a successful business. Yet, while there were exceptions, a great deal of this work remained inherently biased, emphasising an idealistic 'trait' approach. Since, in the past, the overwhelming majority of successful entrepreneurs had been men, it seemed clear that 'masculine' attributes such as ambition, assertiveness and logical thought processes, were the ones needed successfully to establish a business.⁴⁷ Much of this work thus simply assessed female business owners in terms of male value profiles, failing to recognise that female entrepreneurs were not simply businessmen in skirts.

Furthermore, large bodies of mainstream academic research remain focused on the male half the population, neglecting gender distinctions;⁴⁸ much of that which does examine women's lives ignores the insights developed by feminist theory. Goffee and Scase, for instance, while attempting to analyse "the extent to which women are able to overcome experiences of subordination through

⁴⁷ See, for example, G. Solomon and L.W. Fernald, "Value Profiles of Male and Female Entrepreneurs", *International Small Business Journal* Vol. 6, No. 3, Spring, 1988, and S. Cromie, "Similarities and Differences between Women and Men Who Choose Business Proprietorship", *International Small Business Journal* Vol. 5, No. 3, Spring, 1987.

⁴⁸ Focusing on black entrepreneurs, Kirby, for example, makes no mention of sex or gender in his work. All his entrepreneurs are implicitly male, despite consensus that black women start up more than seventy per cent of the new small businesses in South Africa (D. Kirby, "Small Firms in The Economy of South Africa", *International Small Business Journal* Vol. 4, No. 2, Winter 1985/86).

business proprietorship",⁴⁹ managed to do so with minimal reference to the feminist literature and gender theory published during the 1970s and 1980s.⁵⁰ Even in 1991, others felt free to discuss the relationship between attitudes and entrepreneurship without so much as a mention of sex or gender.⁵¹ Spender's 1985 warning that "feminist ideas which no longer have the appeal of 'novelty'... will drift - as they have in the past - to the brink of oblivion"⁵² remains pertinent today.

The following chapters endeavour, in a South African context, and from a feminist perspective, to fill in some of the gaps for some of the women. Housework and paid work, husbands and children, were the main themes raised by the interviewees. Oral history was complemented by written records wherever white South African women's voices could be found. Women's words, whether recorded in magazines or newsletters, in the publications of women's organisations or through interviews, provide an entrée into the lives of the majority of the white South African population. This study indicates that since the 1960s, white women have increasingly attempted to integrate the public domain of paid employment with the private sphere of the home and the family. Unlike white men, women have been and are less able to construct

⁴⁹ Goffee and Scase, *Women in Charge*, p. 8.

⁵⁰ According to their bibliography only three such books were used: J. Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*; R. Morgan, *Sisterhood is Powerful* and A. Oakley, *Subject Woman* (Goffee & Scase, *Women in Charge*, pp. 143-150).

⁵¹ P.B. Robinson, D.V. Stimpson, J.C. Huefner & H.K. Hunt, "An Attitude Approach to the Prediction of Entrepreneurship", *Entrepreneurship in Theory and Practice* Vol. 15, No. 4, Summer 1991.

⁵² Spender, *For The Record*, p. 2.

clear distinctions between the two spheres: according to those interviewed for this study, such distinctions are both undesirable and impractical.

Chapter One

The Gospel of the Home: Women, Work and Marriage 1960 - 1973

*"I wanna be Bobby's Girl, I wanna be Bobby's girl,
That's the most important thing to me.
And if I was Bobby's girl, if I was Bobby's girl,
What a grateful thankful girl I'd be..."¹*

*"When a Woman Marries She Gets a Free Guardian, Escort,
Breadwinner, Provider of House, Food, Clothing and Payer of
Bills ... Do Wives Realise How Lucky They Are?"²*

The beginning of the 1960s saw an adult white woman's role in life very clearly defined as that of wife and mother. Nationally, in 1960, a mere eleven per cent of white women over the age of twenty had never been married.³ Of those who married in 1960, almost ninety per cent had done so before they were twenty five years of age, and only one per cent waited until their thirtieth birthday before marching up the aisle.⁴ In metropolitan Cape Town in the same year, fully eighty three per cent of white women aged twenty or more either were or

¹ Edward Kassner Music, London, c.1962.

² Editorial, *Femina and Woman's Life* 29 August 1963, p. 12.

³ Bureau of Statistics, *Report on Marriages and Divorces, 1960* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1967), p. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 14 and 17.

had been married, and the bulk of those who were not married were in their early twenties.⁵ The vast majority of white women were wives, and most were wives long before they reached thirty years of age. Typically, wifehood was rapidly followed by motherhood: over forty per cent of white babies were born to mothers aged twenty four years or younger.⁶

Marriage is and was a legal institution defining rights and duties between marital partners, as well as between them and society as a whole: "On marriage, the parties undergo a change of status which affects their legal position, in private law as well as in public law."⁷ Women who married without an ante-nuptial

⁵ Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census 1960*, Vol. 2 (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1960), Metropolitan Cape Town, Part 1 - 2, Table 5, p. 16. These figures include widows and divorcees and are supported by a survey conducted by the University of Cape Town of women who graduated in 1959/1960. Eighty two per cent were married, sixty per cent within three years of graduation (*Argus* 9 June 1970).

⁶ The number of births to white women in South Africa aged twenty four or younger, expressed as a percentage of the total number of births to white women was: 1960: 41.3%; 1965: 44.0%; 1970: 42.0%; 1973: 37.0% (Bureau of Statistics, *Report on Births, 1965* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1965), p. 21; Department of Statistics, *Report on Births, 1973* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1973), p. 33; Department of Statistics, *Report on Births, 1977* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1977), pp. 19 and 44). In addition, a survey by *Femina and Woman's Life* on the "Ideal Family" revealed that it comprised four children: "there was overwhelming disapproval of married couples who ... deliberately avoid having any" and "the ideal interval between marriage and the first child was ... between one year and less than two." (*Femina and Woman's Life* 12 May 1960, p. 21.)

⁷ H.R. Hahlo, *The South African Law of Husband and Wife* (Cape Town: Juta, 1985), p. 127.

contract⁸ during the 1960s found themselves unable to make legally binding contracts, unable to sue on their own behalf, and unable to accept inheritances without their husbands' permission. In fact:

There are marked similarities between the legal position of a minor and that of a married woman But whereas the guardianship of a minor serves the interests of the minor, the marital power serves primarily the interests of the husband.⁹

In particular, the marital power of the husband established and preserved the economic and financial dependence of wives on their husbands. For example, it was only in 1966 that a wife was legally allowed to operate a current account with a bank.¹⁰

But laws are not constructed in a vacuum; they generally reflect behaviour sanctioned by ruling groups within a context of socially constructed norms. Thus, while marriage is a legal institution, it is also an institution embodying particular responsibilities and obligations on the part of both husband and wife, and as such must be inextricably linked to socially constructed and socially maintained gender roles.

Neither an outline of marriage-related statutes, nor statistics describing the prevalence of marriage, can reveal the meaning of matrimony and its place in the lives of the individuals involved. Examination of the women's magazines

⁸ Fully sixty six per cent of bachelor/spinster weddings in 1960 were unaccompanied by ante-nuptial contracts. By 1973 over half of said unions were preceded by such contracts (*Report on Marriages and Divorces, 1960*, p. 20; Department of Statistics, *Report on Marriages and Divorces, 1973* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1973), p. 2).

⁹ Hahlo, *South African Law*, p. 194.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

published during the 1960s adds flesh to the dry bones of statistics and adds body to the anatomy of the law, revealing far more graphically the 'vital statistics' of socially desirable behaviour for women in a society where marriage was the norm. In 1963 Friedan had exposed the way in which the messages embodied in advertisements, articles, editorials and advice columns played a large part in the shaping of women's lives, in the creation of the myth of the 'happy housewife'.¹¹ More recently, Ehrenreich and English have commented on the power of the media to reflect and promote particular lifestyles through the way in which they provided a means by which the 'experts' could reach their constituencies.¹²

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, American magazines preached the gospel of housewifery to an audience eager to do what was right.¹³ While Friedan records the intensity of the North American 'race' into domesticity,¹⁴ the hegemony of wifehood extended far beyond American geographical boundaries. For British women, research undertaken during the 1960s concluded that the burning question was not *whether* they should marry, but

¹¹ The second chapter of *The Feminine Mystique* is devoted to the idealised images of women delivered to women through the medium of American magazines. Chapter nine examines the role of advertising (B. Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), pp. 30-61, and pp. 181-205).

¹² B. Ehrenreich and D. English, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women* (London: Pluto Press, 1979), p. 263.

¹³ Ehrenreich and English observed the trend for American women to turn to popular magazines for 'guidance' precisely because those publications featured 'expert' advice. They also refer to the influence of 'market place psychology' purveyed in the magazines (*ibid.*, pp. 189 and 289).

¹⁴ Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, p. 159.

whom they should marry.¹⁵ The same assumption - that matrimony equalled destiny for white South African women - was apparent in a new local English-medium magazine.

Women's Magazines: The Woman You Would Like To Be¹⁶

The first edition of *Fair Lady* in 1965 vividly portrayed the stereotypical meaning of marriage and motherhood in a white woman's life. The moment a girl left childhood, her life revolved around finding and keeping a husband, bearing and rearing children, making and maintaining a home (usually with the assistance of a black domestic servant), until old age brought widowhood and loneliness. Marriage, children and a life of domesticity were the virtually inevitable consequences of being white and female in South Africa during the 1960s. Thus according to *Fair Lady*, white South African women could divide their lives into seven distinct ages:

Her First age is lived as a child as the centre of her parents' life.

Her Second age is occupied with adolescence, education, some form of work, and eventually marriage. I have discounted the spinsters who make something of themselves because they have to.

Her Third age is taken up with the early years of her marriage, homemaking and the birth of her children who are at this age babies, and completely dependent on her.

¹⁵ A. Oakley, "Conventional Families", in R. Rapoport, M. Fogarty and R. Rapoport (eds), *Families in Britain* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 131.

¹⁶ This slogan was the subheading of *Fair Lady* magazine from its first publication in 1965.

Her fourth age represents the 35 year old watershed which brings her to the first of a series of realisations. Her children are away and absorbed at school; her own face and body ageing; her husband at the same age still considered young; and her home and garden requiring supervision but no creative effort.

Her Fifth age brings menopause, the physical reminder of the end of her reproductive ability, and the maturity and departure of her children from the home.

Her Sixth age may bring the unexpected dividend of grandchildren, much loved but not entirely hers. It may also bring widowhood in its train, for the 1960 census figures show that there are five times as many widows in the country as widowers.

The Seventh age brings old age and infirmity, dependence and almost certainly widowhood.¹⁷

If white women expected to withdraw into the seclusion of the home after marrying, white husbands anticipated being able to support house-bound wives and their offspring. They were not disappointed. The economic protection of whites under the apartheid regime, combined with the boom years of the 1960s,¹⁸ provided an affluence enabling most white wives to be full-time homemakers.¹⁹ Financially at least, as long as their husbands remained alive, the kind of existence described above was not beyond the realms of possibility for many white women.

¹⁷ *Fair Lady* March 1965, pp. 22 ff. (Early editions were published monthly.)

¹⁸ Between 1960 and 1970 the economy grew at 5.6 per cent annually, with real per capita income increasing at a rate of three per cent per year (S. Terreblanche and N. Nattrass, "A Periodization of The Political Economy From 1910" in N. Nattrass and E. Ardington (eds), *The Political Economy of South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 14).

¹⁹ Real white wages grew at three per cent per year between 1948 and 1973 (M. McGrath, "Economic Growth, Income Distribution and Social Change" in Nattrass and Ardington, *The Political Economy*, p. 91).

While "The Seven Ages" focused on the majority who conformed, it also made mention of those who did not. Divorce remained unmentionable; so too did lesbians; widows were to be pitied; working wives and spinsters were literally 'discounted'. Implicit in "The Seven Ages" is the notion that 'real' women were those dependent on husbands. The article effectively constructs a third gender group, dividing society into men, women (those that marry and have children) and 'others'.

An examination of the pages of women's magazines during the 1960s indicates that these 'others', whether divorced, widowed or never married, and particularly the latter, were deemed to be white South Africa's unfortunates, her social failures and misfits. Thus it was argued:

Few women are spinsters by choice ... they get sidetracked into academics and business ... the sooner the single woman accepts that she is not integrated in society, the sooner she'll find happiness. Biologically she doesn't belong.²⁰

As one reader pointed out, "the last thing a woman wants is to be left high and dry upon a shelf."²¹ Unattached women found themselves marginalised by their married sisters; one of *Fair Lady's* correspondents reported that "as a single woman over thirty, I am often the object of curiosity."²² Marriage, and the legal subordination of women by their husbands that it entailed, were taken for granted and considered to be an entirely natural state of affairs. "Naturally I'd like to be married. It's the only natural and really satisfactory state for any

²⁰ *Fair Lady* 18 August 1971, p. 221.

²¹ *Femina and Woman's Life* 9 September 1965, p. 7.

²² *Fair Lady* 31 March 1971, p. 181.

woman to live in".²³ The legal ramifications of wedlock were considered not only to be part of the natural order, but to be eminently desirable as well.

"Well, Why Aren't You Married?" trumpeted an article focusing on single girls.

"All girls want to get married ... it is still society's best institution - no other one has afforded us more shelter, comfort, and satisfaction".²⁴

Paid employment prior to marriage seems to have been generally accepted. As "The Seven Ages" suggests, "some form of work" was a preparation for the full-time commitment marriage demanded of women. As a woman who finished school during the 1960s recalled,

[w]e didn't think about what the future would hold aside from our first job. The girls in my age group always thought of marriage. When you got to twenty two, there was marriage, and then you settled down.²⁵

Work was thus something that was generally terminated by matrimony, with women encouraged to choose between work and marriage in favour of the latter. As one correspondent sternly advised: "I hope that any young girl who is in doubt as to whether she should sacrifice her career for the life of a housewife will ... make up her mind to marry."²⁶ Another cautioned that "I have always felt that a woman's only career should be that of housewife and mother".²⁷ A third virtuously explained that "I have nothing against a newly married girl working to help establish a home, but once she has a family, she has

²³ *Ibid.*, 7 September 1966, p. 30.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 26 June 1969, p. 53.

²⁵ K. Dovey, L. Laughton and J. Durandt, *Working in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985), p. 280.

²⁶ *Femina and Woman's Life* 13 October 1960, p. 15.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 29 September 1960, p. 15.

automatically, and of her own accord, chosen an altogether different career - that of housewife."²⁸ The expectation that women's working lives would be over once they found their man was clear. One informant, who became both a wife and a mother the year after she left school in 1967, was horrified to realise that her husband could not afford to maintain her in the way she had anticipated:

I never expected to go and work, my mom never worked I always assumed that being a mother that you stayed at home. I never thought I would have to go out and work. I resented it terribly.²⁹

Magazine interviews with working girls reflected similar understandings, often ending with comments such as "I'm not really a career girl. If the right man came along I'd gladly give up my job."³⁰

The sacrifice of paid work for unpaid housework was represented as painless, as the only road to happiness for a woman. In a society where many white women employed at least one black domestic servant, subversive American ideas³¹ concerning the stultifying nature of housewifery seemed to have little impact. Marriage, domesticity and female happiness were presented as virtually synonymous, and the possibility of pursuing a career after the nuptials was inconceivable to many. The idea of working after marriage "would just never have entered my head" explained a woman who had married in the early

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 13 April 1961, p. 11.

²⁹ Anne Smith, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 25 January 1994.

³⁰ *Fair Lady* 7 September 1966, p. 45.

³¹ Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*.

1960s.³² Another, who had trained as a teacher before giving up work after her marriage in 1959, remembered:

I was not allowed to follow a career It just wouldn't have been done. I was never told 'you may not', but it was made very clear to me that I couldn't.³³

A panel of six working women, all of whom were married, found themselves in agreement that:

[e]very career woman in South Africa, particularly those who are unmarried by choice or circumstances, would swop that career tomorrow, in order to become what she should be in the first place - somebody's wife, and some child's mother.³⁴

Those who failed to find husbands faced emotional and psychological hazards, as another writer pointed out:

The woman who has not married by the time she is in her thirties is more than likely to think of herself as being left on the shelf ... she dreams of a man who can dominate her ... she is often emotionally insecure ... she may easily become as romantic and unrealistic as a teenager.³⁵

Women without lawfully wedded husbands were told: "You must learn to recognise your state for what it is and recognise its limitations - it's easier to cope with when you've admitted that you are, in plain language, a spinster."³⁶ If one could not marry then one should learn to cope as best one could in the unfortunate circumstances. An article published in 1967 discussed the

³² Rina Graham, interviewed by the author, Malmesbury, 24 December 1993.

³³ Elizabeth Murray, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 16 June 1993.

³⁴ *Femina and Woman's Life* 10 March 1966, p. 39.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 29 March 1962, p. 43.

³⁶ *Fair Lady* 11 January 1967, p. 18.

contemporary single girl in terms which seemed to indicate a shift in perception:

"We've reached the stage where ... the single girl's position seems enviable."

But it proceeded to explain at length why in fact it was not, and warned that

"you should recognise that ... there can be no satisfactory substitute for marriage."³⁷ The point was reiterated later in the year by another magazine:

It would seem to be that whereas the very young single girl skims happily through the first years of her single days, the older girl gains less and less ... with every year that passes. Marriage is the answer, and the single girl must find her man.³⁸

In 1960, whereas only eleven per cent of white South African women over the age of twenty had never married, another fifteen per cent were widowed or divorced.³⁹ These significant numbers of unmarried, divorced or widowed women were considered to be an important social problem. Widows, especially those who were younger, were represented as facing a lifetime of penury,⁴⁰ needing to be 'rehabilitated' back into society.⁴¹ Divorcees, considered to be on the prowl for a new man, were allegedly a danger to existing marriages.⁴² "Just get divorced, and every wife in your circle of friends cuts you stone dead. She

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 11 January 1967, pp. 16 and 19.

³⁸ *Femina and Woman's Life* 14 December 1967, p. 61.

³⁹ Of a total population of 920,958 white women aged twenty or more, 23,321 (2.5%) were divorced, while 120,049 (13%) were widowed (*Report on Marriages and Divorces, 1960*, p. 3).

⁴⁰ See, for example, South African Public Library, Cape Town: *Argus* Clippings File: "Women" (hereafter *Argus* Clippings) 15 June 1963; 13 July 1963; 5 December 1963; 19 May 1967; 27 January 1968.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 28 April 1964.

⁴² *Fair Lady* 7 February 1968, pp. 125-7.

thinks that now you're free, you have nothing else to do with your claws but rip her marriage to bits."⁴³ Yet while divorcees and widows had conformed, at least for a time, to social expectations, spinsters had not.⁴⁴ While younger women might still be searching for a man, those a little older were thought to be conducting a seemingly unconscious revolt against their own biological destinies.

"The problem of the bachelor girl",⁴⁵ even if it was largely a figment of the media's imagination, was represented as an issue that needed to be resolved for society's sake. The root of the problem was perceived to lie in the manner in which single women deported themselves. The inappropriate behaviour of spinsters was thus analysed and explicated; if spinsters knew where they were going wrong, they would be able to alter their tactics. Successfully married readers were asked to send in tips so that those struggling to find husbands might benefit from the triumphant experience of those who bore a wedding ring.⁴⁶

Working women who had not yet found their man were admonished that it was their jobs that were impeding their marital prospects. Single women were

⁴³ *Argus* Clippings, 19 June 1967.

⁴⁴ The number of spinsters did not increase dramatically over the period 1960 to 1973. The number of marriages per thousand of the population actually rose over this period from 9.3 in 1960 to 10.0 in 1973 (Central Statistical Services, *Report on Births, 1990* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1992), p. xi).

⁴⁵ *Femina and Woman's Life* 17 November 1966, p. 49.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 18 February 1960, p. 79.

warned that they ran the risk of losing their femininity and all prospects of happiness unless they gave up paid employment in favour of marriage:

The career of the unmarried woman should be drawing to its end by the time she is about twenty seven or twenty eight. Otherwise that girl is already becoming something of a social problem ... she is acquiring ... something of the stigma of the girl who's left on the shelf If she continues with her career ... it [becomes] that much harder for her ever to become a wife with anything feminine or womanly to give to whatever husband she gets She becomes fierce, hard ... she shines with a masculine shine.⁴⁷

A letter to *Fair Lady's* problem page revealed that working women themselves were aware of the effects of employment on their femininity:

I am 31, have a good and interesting job and am unmarried. I was quite happy but then a friend told me I was in grave danger of becoming hard I don't want to become hard - how can I prevent it?⁴⁸

That femininity was rooted in marriage was made clear by the response. "Your friend may have been right, because this is frequently the fate of intellectual women who do not marry."⁴⁹

The same publication recommended that girls yearning for husbands should "learn how to say no in such a way that it sounds like maybe".⁵⁰ Bachelor girls were set up in opposition to brides and described as girls short of "patience, acceptance and good humour":

She's the big wheel and expects everybody else to be little cogs She's the one who wants a man's attention every minute ...

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 10 March 1966, p. 37.

⁴⁸ *Fair Lady* 9 August 1967, p. 139.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 25 June 1969, p. 139.

[she is] over-possessive She never learns that proving her own appeal at the cost of her man's masculinity and ego is not only selfish, it's cruel.⁵¹

Those who had the best chances of becoming brides were described in terms that left no doubt that achieving the ideal of marriage involved their grateful acceptance of a personal patriarch. Congratulated on being willing to "submerge" their ego and to take disappointment in their stride, potential brides were those who rejoiced at the prospect of a lifetime of domesticity, able to "get pride and pleasure out of her household chores ... [when] he's got his feet up".⁵² Thus unmarried women were exhorted to behave in particular ways, to be submissive, undemanding and supportive in order to terminate their unnatural and undesirable state.

The alleged psychological and emotional damage inherent in not marrying, in conjunction with the inevitable and permanent loss of their femininity, was the stick with which girls unable to capture a man were threatened. The carrot was the alleged advantages of the institution of matrimony. One of the benefits of getting married and raising a family was the expression it supposedly gave to women's innate nurturing and caring capacities. Without an outlet for these biologically-based expressions of femininity, women would inevitably be unfulfilled and frustrated. Caring roles other than that of mother were discussed and acknowledged, but unmarried women were warned: "However much love you pour out on other people's children, the day will come when you will be sharply reminded that they are not your own."⁵³ A lonely divorcee who "moved

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 28 October 1970, pp. 62-63.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 11 January 1967, p. 18.

in to nurse an ailing relative so that she could feel once again the satisfaction of being a vital, much needed cog in the family machine" was cautioned that she ran the risk of being unloved and unwanted without her own family and home.⁵⁴ It was widely understood that women's biological need to nurture could only be 'properly' fulfilled by marriage and a family.

Despite the social desirability of marriage, the numbers of single women living on their own increased during the 1960s.⁵⁵ For most this was a temporary step on the road to marriage. Nonetheless, moving away from the supervision of home and parents before marriage was perceived by many as an attack on prevailing moral standards and values. Living alone represented a departure from earlier norms and drew censure. Previously,

[w]hen the young man or young woman had the adolescent itch for independent living, they overcame it and stayed at home until they married Girls ... have always been a great responsibility to their parents. Now far too many are heartbreaks. Far too often, the girl of today seizes eagerly the freedom of this brash new world. She defies criticism and censure, and even invites comment by her reprehensible behaviour If she chooses to be a lass on the loose, she will have to pay a high price for this licence of liberty, for to a woman, love and marriage must be synonymous.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 7 September 1966, p. 30.

⁵⁵ While the total number of unmarried women did not increase substantially, more were beginning to delay marriage for a few years. At least some of these were moving out of their parents' home into 'pads' of their own before finally succumbing to the seductive chime of wedding bells. *Fair Lady* featured several articles on the problems faced by young women living away from home. Security and transport were represented as problems, while for those who were sharing with other young women, differing standards and practices could generate conflict ("Women Alone", *Fair Lady* 7 September 1966, pp. 28 ff).

⁵⁶ *Femina and Woman's Life* 24 May 1962, p. 65.

Other articles, however, acknowledged the concern of parents, but brought a new perspective to bear, arguing that daughters' decisions to live on their own did not always reflect poor parenting or a permanent escape from marriage. Living away from the control of parents did not necessarily mean never marrying, and in fact could be interpreted as a step on the road to the altar, as running a flat allegedly prepared women to run their own homes later on.⁵⁷

Women in the Workforce

Pressures to marry were enormous: from peers, parents and communities, from the media, magazines and men. Nevertheless, there were women who failed to marry. There were also increasing numbers whose marriages had ended as a consequence either of divorce or of widowhood. Although the proportion of single women remained relatively constant over this period, rising population levels meant increasingly greater absolute numbers of never-married women. Between 1960 and 1973 the number of divorces granted each year more than doubled,⁵⁸ while the number of widows grew from 120,079 to 148,620 in 1972.⁵⁹ It was generally these women who worked. As "The Seven Ages" pointed out, economic necessity often meant that those not supported by a bread-winning husband had to enter or continue paid employment.

⁵⁷ *Fair Lady* 7 September 1966, p. 28.

⁵⁸ Four thousand, three hundred and twenty eight divorces were granted in 1960 and 8,890 in 1973 (Central Statistical Services, *Report on Marriages and Divorces, 1990* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1992), pp. 7-8).

⁵⁹ Department of Statistics, *South African Statistics 1972* (Pretoria: Government Printer, nd), Table A-21.

Support for women wishing to work came from the Business and Professional Women's Club, an institution with associate clubs in most of the industrialised world. In South Africa, its members were primarily white women, most of whom supported the right of women to return to work once their children were older, provided this did not meet with opposition from husbands. The Club was supposedly apolitical; members who might be disturbed by living in apartheid South Africa were encouraged to salve their consciences by supporting local charities. Ignoring discrimination against black men and women, the Club limited itself to opposing some of the discriminatory practices affecting white women: its prime concern, by the latter part of the 1960s, was the legislative inequalities embodied in the marriage laws.

However, in the face of overwhelming disapproval of working white women, the Club had a vested interest in providing support for its members by facilitating the sharing of experiences and by endeavouring to explain to anyone willing to listen that working women were not necessarily 'unwomanly'.

Examination of the membership lists of the Cape Town Business and Professional Women's Club indicates that several were single, and that this was an issue. The editor of the Club's *Cape News* initiated a series of articles on women living alone, beginning with herself. She worked as a secretary to an old age home,

where I try to give sympathy and understanding, and where I feel needed. I think for a woman it is essential to feel needed. This fulfils some deep requirement without which I doubt if happiness would ever be complete.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ *Cape News* October 1968.

Her attempts to establish that she was a normal, caring woman, but that her nurturing capacity had been directed towards non-family members, reflects the prevalent notion that unattached women were 'unnatural'. In November 1968, the Club's newsletter published another article written by a single woman, asking how many women living alone would do so by choice. The editor took great care to stress that her single status was *not* of her own choosing, but the result of circumstances beyond her control.⁶¹ Yet there were signs that change, albeit incremental, was taking place. The following year another contributor stated that she could think of several single women living alone "even though it was unheard of until recently." She continued: "I think that if you have fairly good health and reasonable financial security, plus a natural enthusiasm for living ... it is possible for a woman to live alone and yet have a full and interesting life."⁶²

While a few married women with adult children worked, the majority of those employed were unattached white women. Whether young and still seeking a spouse, or older and 'left on the shelf', or divorced or widowed, it was women without men who tended to take advantage of opportunities to enter the labour force. If the range of jobs open to them was relatively restricted,⁶³ so too were the salaries: in 1970 the median income for employed white women was less

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, November 1968.

⁶² *Ibid.*, June 1969.

⁶³ As late as 1973, of a total of 359,265 white female employees, over eighty three percent were either teachers, nurses, or clerical employees (Department of Labour, *Manpower Survey* No. 10, 1973 (np: Government Printer, nd), p. 20).

than half that of men.⁶⁴ Similarly, careers guidance was limited. In the main, schools did not see it "as their responsibility to do more than get [girls] through matric."⁶⁵

School-leavers tended to find information about jobs and training through friends, the media, women's organisations and perhaps from the advertisements of tertiary educational institutions. A woman who finished school towards the end of the 1960s remembered having been given no advice whatsoever: "In my day nobody gave us advice, we just thought what you wanted to do and then tried to do it."⁶⁶ Another, who finished school in 1971, had wanted to do a B.Comm. at university, but the only advice she had been given by a teacher was that a "B.Comm. would be very boring As a matter of fact she thought I should do English. That was it."⁶⁷

Others who completed school during the 1960s, were influenced by family and friends to accept occupations 'appropriate' to women:

I was very keen to study medicine. My father's brother was in a position of considerable authority in the medical school and he said quite firmly that he wouldn't dream of giving me a

⁶⁴ J. Cock, *Maids And Madams* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1980), p. 253.

⁶⁵ Barbara Hall, personal correspondence, 25 September 1993. According to Ms Hall, a well qualified and experienced careers counsellor, careers guidance was only introduced to South African state schools at the beginning of the 1970s.

⁶⁶ Reinette Camphor, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 4 February 1993.

⁶⁷ Jenny Marot, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 26 October 1993.

place that could be filled by a man ... so, encouraged by my friends, I went into physiotherapy.⁶⁸

Fathers could discourage further training simply by withholding finance, while mothers could encourage their daughters to enter the marriage market where appearances were all-important:

Before I left school, I was sure I'd go on to varsity My father and mother were very lukewarm about the whole varsity idea - Daddy said he'd have to borrow money for me to go. I'm an only child and I would have thought they could have afforded it. My mother ... thought I'd be much better off doing a secretarial course so that I could work and earn money and 'dress well'.⁶⁹

Families could downplay the importance of girls working in favour of prioritising the careers of their brothers:

I had, I have, an older brother, so not a great deal of emphasis was placed on my life, or my career, or where I should go, so I was left with a feeling that I should either teach or nurse. Or be a secretary. And I put that last because actually it filled me with total horror. The idea of sitting in an office in a typing pool, as they were in those days, at a typewriter from eight-thirty to five, with an hour for lunch, filled me with horror. So when I left school, I had no idea what I wanted to do, and I had no career guidance whatsoever.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Dovey et al, *Working*, p. 269. An editorial of the *South African Medical Journal* also noted the prejudice against female doctors. The "high casualty rate among female medical graduates" meant that "a case can still be made against the acceptance of a category of student, who might in the long run, offer less service than the average doctor." (Editorial, *South African Medical Journal* 8 July 1972, p. 946.)

⁶⁹ Dovey et al, *Working*, p. 339.

⁷⁰ Elizabeth Murray, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 16 June 1993.

Whether girls were given advice or not, they were expected to be careful about their choices. Too much education might ruin their marriage prospects, and at least some parents were concerned that a university education would turn their daughters into 'blue stockings'. As was recalled by an informant who went to university to study for a Bachelor of Arts degree in the mid 1960s, "my dad supported me, my mom was a bit startled, she was terribly dubious, she thought I'd get too high flown."⁷¹

Magazine correspondents agreed that tertiary education was wasted on girls. Instead of going to university, they inquired,

[w]ould that girl not be better occupied learning as soon as possible after leaving school how to stand on her own feet, how to budget in preparation for her future as a wife and home keeper?⁷²

While university education remained somewhat dubious, a variety of occupations and training courses were far more acceptable. Women's magazines provided advice, often consisting of thinly disguised fashion or beauty articles. For example, articles suggested the right clothes to wear for interviews, or the right make up to wear to the office.⁷³ There was, however, more substantial information as well, and a variety of different jobs were featured during the 1960s.

⁷¹ Lyn Bryer, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 15 June 1993.

⁷² *Femina and Woman's Life* 16 February 1962, p. 9.

⁷³ *Close Up* 20 November 1970, pp. 44, 45 and 47; *Femina and Woman's Life* 3 November 1966, p. 63.

Among the professions discussed at length on the pages of women's magazines were physiotherapy, social work, nursing and teaching.⁷⁴ A theme common to all was the way in which these kinds of jobs helped prepare young women for their future role as wives and mothers. The pros and cons of particular jobs were discussed so that young girls could make a wise choice, in order to improve their position in the marriage stakes. Nursing and teaching allegedly prepared a woman particularly well for running a home and raising a family. Poor pay was no reason to dismiss primary school teaching: it supposedly taught potential mothers how to train their children. After all, as one newly qualified teacher explained, the money would "do for now, later our husbands will have to worry."⁷⁵ Air hostessing could also be harnessed to the cause of preparing girls for marriage. As one new recruit explained, "you know that when you are married you are going to be able to look after your husband."⁷⁶ As the article noted with perhaps greater accuracy: "there's much more chance of meeting men in this sort of job."⁷⁷ Several years later the message was reinforced by another magazine:

The airline authorities are proud ... that their training turns the girls into excellent marriage material - "they can mix a guy's cocktails, render him first aid, act as a perfect hostess, always

⁷⁴ See, for example, *Femina and Woman's Life* 24 March 1966, p. 33 for career advice for air hostesses, beauticians, hair dressing, modelling, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, social work, teaching and window dressing. See also *Darling* 25 November 1970, pp. 28-32; 18 October 1972, pp. 24 ff.; 24 January 1973, pp. 24-29; 16 May 1973, pp. 64-67.

⁷⁵ *Fair Lady* 30 October 1968, p. 57.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 26 July 1967, p. 27.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

look gorgeous It's no wonder we lose them to husbands!"⁷⁸

The notion of using a job to snare potential husbands lay behind much of the careers advice of the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1970 an article appeared analysing twelve different careers on the basis of their 'man potential'. For girls trying to find husbands, the best options were supposedly the jobs of private secretary, air hostess, public relations officer, hotel receptionist or nurse. The worst jobs, from the finding-a-husband perspective, were those concerned with computer programming, modelling, teaching, acting or being a typist.⁷⁹ A similar feature appeared in another magazine two years later,⁸⁰ succeeded the following year by an article snappily entitled "How to marry your boss".⁸¹ 1973 saw the theme continued through a discussion of male perspectives on different jobs for women:

Your job ... can be a complete sex appeal give away ... before you choose your career or change your job take note. Your work gives men preconceived ideas on whether you're sexier than the next bird.⁸²

The article advised that potential husbands would be looking for nurses, strippers, teachers, filing clerks, switchboard operators and librarians.⁸³ Librarianship found favour among numerous women precisely because females

⁷⁸ *Darling* 18 October 1972, p. 31.

⁷⁹ *Femina and Woman's Life* 11 June 1970, p. 94.

⁸⁰ *Darling* 19 April 1972, pp. 52 ff.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 24 January 1973, pp. 28-29.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 16 May 1973, p. 64.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-67.

stopped working when they married, so there were always openings for new librarians. As *Career Woman* explained:

there is little prospect that the long list of vacancies will be easily filled in the future since 85% of the recruits are women and marriage is a constant drain on this section of the personnel.⁸⁴

The "constant drain" of female employees from schools, libraries and other public sector occupations was enforced through the Public Service Act of 1957 whereby women were assumed to have voluntarily resigned the instant they married.⁸⁵

That work was situated within the context of marriage and domesticity was made clear by the magazines: *Fair Lady* and *Femina and Woman's Life* tended to emphasise the impact of careers on marriage. The Federation of Business and Professional Women tended to stress women's domestic role as important in terms of the wider community. For example, it was argued that society was based on the family; in order to protect tried and trusted social values and norms it was necessary to assist women in fulfilling their domestic duties:

Our educational system today ... makes little or no provision for equipping girls for the most important function of their lives - that of being wives, mothers and homemakers ... serious consideration [should] be given to the introduction of six months' or one year's compulsory training in homemaking for all our girls immediately they leave school ... if our society ... is not to crumble They should be given a basic training which would include the fundamentals of running a home, of bookkeeping and budgeting, of catering and cooking ... of

⁸⁴ *Career Woman* January 1958.

⁸⁵ Cock, *Maids and Madams*, p. 247. Similarly, regulations which finally permitted appointment of white women to the police force stated that "If she marries while in the police, she shall...be deemed to have resigned voluntarily" (*Argus* 6 March 1964).

laundrying, of first aid and home nursing, typing ... child care and health promotion I believe it would give every one of our girls a special pride in being first and foremost a homemaker.⁸⁶

And while one of the Business and Professional Women's Club's objectives was for members to strive to "acquire occupational training and advanced education", this was precisely because they could then "use their occupational capacities and intelligence for the advantage of others as well as themselves."⁸⁷

Another aspect of education and training for white women was raised by a company chairman interviewed by the Business and Professional Women's Club. A degree of education for women was desirable, he stated, because women who were knowledgeable in a wide range of subjects were better companions and more interesting to their husbands.⁸⁸ The National Federation of Business and Professional Women also felt that providing schoolgirls with careers advice was part of the function of local clubs. This was in the light of concerns raised by the Federation after an investigation into career guidance in schools. After interviewing large numbers of students, the organisation had come to the following conclusion:

All too many of the students we interviewed were of the opinion that an unwise choice [of career] on their part would not be too disastrous because 'for a woman it doesn't matter too much'.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Radio Broadcast, 1971, by Margaret Lessing, in her capacity as a National Executive Member of the Business and Professional Women's Club (hereafter BPW). Cited in *Career Woman* No. 31, 1971.

⁸⁷ *Career Woman* No. 12, 1965.

⁸⁸ *Cape News* February 1968.

⁸⁹ *Career Woman* No. 28, 1970.

If the Club advocated training for women, it certainly was not at the expense of homemaking. Instead, training could serve two purposes. Firstly, it would enable the older woman to return to the work place, after her children had grown up. Secondly, training could help women be better mothers and homemakers. The Cape Town branch accordingly organised a careers evening at St. Mary's High School in 1974 and provided a pamphlet explaining the purpose of the evening to the girls and their parents:

The purpose of the careers guidance project is to encourage girls to take up careers in the technical field, and also the desire of the National Federation that the girls be trained to be good homemakers.⁹⁰

The Cape Technical College also found itself trying to recruit female students, advertising that "the College offers a wide variety of courses for women."⁹¹ Among the courses offered were teaching, art, health and home economics. Under the heading 'commerce', a subheading indicated that women could train to be private secretaries or comptometrists; in the field of technology they could, rather more daringly, become marine radio officers.

The careers information available from such sources as *Fair Lady*, *Femina* and *Woman's Life* and the Business and Professional Women's Club publications, as well as the Cape Technical College, were generally underpinned by the assumption that, in an ideal world, paid female employment should be terminated by marriage, and that training should be in appropriate fields.⁹²

⁹⁰ *Cape News* October 1974.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, June 1966.

⁹² The statistics cited at the beginning of this chapter suggest that this assumption was largely correct. Research conducted by the University of Cape Town in 1970, into women who graduated in 1959/60, indicated that married B.A. graduates worked for an average of thirty nine months after graduation,

Unfortunately, given the rising number of widows and divorcees, sensible women needed to be able to support themselves and their offspring if the worst came to the worst. Thus the women's media and women's organisations focused mainly on young, as yet unmarried women, or occasionally on those working as a consequence of divorce, widowhood or the failure to marry.

Formal careers advice was also available from some universities. These institutions of higher learning might have been expected to promote broader choices for women, engaged as they were in preparing young people for a world wider than the family. But patriarchal premises continued to infuse their efforts. The guide published by the University of Cape Town's career office in 1972, for example, was entitled *Ask Dad - Sons and Daughters, Which Career?* True, it attempted to counter 'dads' with narrow ideas about daughters. By the simple expedient of adding the words "women" or "daughters" in brackets all the way through, it made clear that a wide range of careers applied to both men and women. But it also contained a special section for females entitled "little women at work", where women were advised that "most Dads" thought that their daughters should plan, as women, to have "something to fall back on".⁹³ The university's campus recruitment scheme, initiated in 1968, was discussed in terms which were even less gender-sensitive. Potential employers, it was reported, were positive about the scheme, as "the interviewees were all men of considerable intelligence and maturity. It was thus possible to conduct

and that eighty two per cent worked as teachers, librarians, secretaries or at universities (*Argus Clippings*, 9 June 1970).

⁹³ N. Lindhard, *Ask Dad - Sons and Daughters, Which Career?* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 1972), p. 6.

interviews at a reasonably high level."⁹⁴ Evidently the careers office, and probably employers as well, assumed that the next generation of employees would be men.

If the University of Cape Town proved inadequate to the task of promoting long term employment for women, could the business world do any better? After all, it was the end user of the skilled labour supposedly in such short supply in this boom period. A careers guide booklet published by Southern Life Assurance seemed to address the issue of skills training for young women. Its cover-page portrayed a girl's face, implying that the contents were of relevance to females. Closer examination, however, revealed that this was about as far as they went - nearly all the faces inside the booklet were those of boys or men. Each section of the booklet had its own sub-heading preceded by a drawing of a male face. The implication behind the portraits was that for Southern Life, "Success", "Intelligence", "Physique", "Ambition", "Money Matters" - all the skills or qualities needed to establish a career - were the prerogative of males. And any doubts were clarified later on:

A man earning an average salary should be able to buy a modest house, clothe and feed his family, educate his children, and run an economical car.⁹⁵

Careers were for men, and men needed to choose wisely in order to support their future wives.

The conceptualisation of white women as homemakers and mothers, as nurturers and carers, and as pretty faces and sex objects, clearly saturated the career

⁹⁴ Careers Office, *Annual Report* (University of Cape Town, 1968), p. 3.

⁹⁵ *The Next 50 Years: A Careers Guide* (Southern Life, 1969), p. 14.

advice of the media. For whites, if not for blacks, wifehood and motherhood, the two terms generally used synonymously, required a full-time commitment that generally precluded commitments elsewhere. Where women were encouraged to train for a job, it was on the implicit understanding that their paid work would end once their family began, and that child-bearing would commence almost immediately. While career advice reflected this understanding, so too did other aspects of the media. For example, a short story in *Fair Lady* followed the travails of a young unmarried career girl who switched jobs to find more money. Eventually an ex-employer (young and handsome) found he was able to "offer [her] a job in six months time. I'll be needing a housekeeper and wife. Would that position suit you?" The young woman promptly resigned, telling her current boss, "I've just been offered the job of a life time. And I've accepted it."⁹⁶

Advertisements reinforced this kind of message, emphasising women's duty to men in a variety of ways. A Joko tea advertisement stated that "a fella could go steady with a girl who has ready a cup of Joko tea."⁹⁷ A bath salts advertisement announced: "wrap Sardo's invisible cloak around your body. And keep yourself the way *he* likes you."⁹⁸ Advertisements also frequently revealed who was perceived to be controlling the domestic finances. Men were asked: "why don't *you* buy your wife a can opener".⁹⁹ A clothing advertisement stated

⁹⁶ *Fair Lady* 23 March 1966, p. 75.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 27 July 1966, p. 106.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 9 June 1971, p. 164; emphasis added.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3 April 1968, p. 110.

that "when *he* buys you that castle in Spain ... jet there in Tej."¹⁰⁰ The advantages of a sewing machine were portrayed in terms of its contribution towards marital and domestic harmony: "happiness is when *he* comes home and says how much did they knock you for that? ... and you made it yourself on your Singer."¹⁰¹ Socially acceptable jobs for men and women were stereotyped in the South African Airways advertisement that featured a little boy and a little girl: "When I'm big I'll be a pilot. I'll be a pretty hostess and we'll fly all over the world."¹⁰²

Successful men had careers; successful women were those married to these male achievers. Such women were credited with providing the foundations upon which their husbands' accomplishments rested, and they basked in reflected glory. That it was a woman's duty to establish the conditions necessary for her husband's progress was made quite clear to the members of the Business and Professional Women's Club:

Councillor Widman stressed the secondary role of women ... not so much in her own capacity, but as the rock on which her husband could depend to assist him in his public work by relieving him of the minutiae of daily living.¹⁰³

While Friedan chiselled away at the myth of the 'happy housewife', exposing the fractures and fissures behind the facade, the vast majority of white South African women remained tight-lipped, unable or unwilling to articulate their

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 14 October 1970, p. 191; emphasis added.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 30 September 1970, p. 171; emphasis added.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 11 November 1970, p. 196.

¹⁰³ *Career Woman* No. 17, 1966.

discontent. Rather than challenging the stereotype, the media and its female audience preferred to reinforce it, the latter claiming that they themselves aspired to be the rock upon which their men stood. In 1969 *Fair Lady* published a letter from a married woman describing her ambitions as a child, when she had dreamt of becoming a great artist, a singer, or a writer. Instead:

Now I'm married and have discovered the miracle of being a wife and mother. I don't need public acclaim when my husband says things like: 'Your way of cooking is my way of eating.' That's the tops.¹⁰⁴

For most white South African women of the 1960s, success lay in their serving as helpmeets to men, or alternatively as helpmeets to society. May 1960 saw the Business and Professional Women's Club celebrate fifty years of the Union of South Africa through the identification of successful women, "women who have contributed something of value." Dr Thelma Gutsche was selected on the basis of her "driving concern for the underdog and the maladjusted in society", Dr Jane Waterstone for "succouring the poor and downtrodden, bringing comfort and healing to the sick". Emily Hobhouse was included for giving "her life to work for the betterment of the oppressed and unfortunate", and Dr Ellen Hellman for devoting "herself to the bringing of more harmony into the relations between black and white".¹⁰⁵ Magazines upheld this tradition in their annual honours lists of notable women. 1961 saw the selection of eight entertainers, two writers and two athletes alongside a schoolgirl who had rescued somebody from an accident.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ *Fair Lady* 19 February 1969, p. 145.

¹⁰⁵ *Career Woman* May 1960.

¹⁰⁶ *Femina and Woman's Life* 23 November 1961, p. 19.

Public acclaim for women, even towards the end of the 1960s, remained directed towards those who displayed their caring or nurturing capacities. *Fair Lady's* annual honours list tended to feature those who had served their country through welfare work, nursing, caring and helping the poor or underprivileged. When not enough of these could be found, notable women were identified as those who had undergone operations. Two out of ten of 1967's honours list featured such women, the remainder being mainly from the teaching profession.¹⁰⁷ 1968s honours list featured a fund raiser for "poor and needy Africans", an occupational therapist, a trade unionist, a secretary, a writer of children's stories and a thirteen year old girl who had rescued a man from under a train.¹⁰⁸

Even the Business and Professional Women's Club retained the focus of nurturing and caring women rather than achievers. "Our Duty as Women" was the title of a lecture given to Club members in 1967: "The things which shackle a nation - superstition, poverty, [and] ill health" were all areas in which women could and should strive for change. Although the International President of the Club was reported as arguing that the two great issues facing women across the world were starvation and discrimination against them,¹⁰⁹ South African branches tended to remain focused on more traditional issues, such as good works and charities. 1969, for example, saw Club members instructed that

¹⁰⁷ *Fair Lady* 27 December 1967, p. 11.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 8 January 1969, pp. 16-17.

¹⁰⁹ *Career Woman* No. 22, 1968.

they, as women, had the secret of ending war, and that they could do this through love.¹¹⁰

Clearly women's public acclaim depended on their capacity for giving and caring. While the best outlet for these drives was the family, society as a whole could be a substitute, and *Fair Lady* featured a number of these women. For instance, a series on women at work during 1969 dealt with, firstly, a copy writer forced to start work after her divorce in order to support her children, then a physiotherapist involved in the air rescue service, a social worker, working with prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families who "helps, counsels, comforts and spreads the warmth of her personality wherever she goes", and a violist for Cape Town's Symphony Orchestra.¹¹¹ Ironically, the final working women feature of the year focused on "The Great Entertainers", women of distinction (without exception such distinction being based on husbands' social status) whose social lives had become full-time jobs and who were prepared to share their secrets with *Fair Lady* readers.¹¹² In part these were careers advice features, describing the benefits of particular careers in terms of preparation for marriage, although they were not marketed as careers advice sections and nothing ever appeared on the cover indicating that working women were featured inside the magazine.

Most white South African women considered a woman's rightful place to be in the home, working without wages for the love of her husband and children.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, No. 24/25, 1969.

¹¹¹ *Fair Lady* 12 November 1969, p. 53.

¹¹² *Fair Lady* 10 December 1969, pp. 48 ff.

Women who did work were divided into four neat groups. In 1965, the Business and Professional Women's Club's president observed that the organisation's members, all working women, fitted into four separate categories: firstly, young girls working until they married; secondly, spinsters who had not netted their man; thirdly, widows and deserted wives "unselfishly working for their children", and lastly married women "selfishly and unfemininely pursuing personal ambition to the detriment of the family".¹¹³

The notion that married women who worked were 'selfish and unfeminine' pervaded the media. Such women were "hacked out of granite", were perceived to "swank They play favourites ... they are resented ... they are too emotional ... they patronise".¹¹⁴ The Business and Professional Women's Club pointed out disapprovingly that women were bringing to business a "steely hard single-mindedness and are more ruthless in business than men".¹¹⁵ *Fair Lady* argued that "the woman who challenges men in their established professions is regarded as a freak".¹¹⁶ Another article described executive women in these terms:

Outwardly, she is generally attractive, chic and decidedly sexy. Her expensive boutique-bought clothes enhance a well rounded, full figure Beneath the facade of feminine allure and charm lie a heart that is as hard as nails and a brain that is coldly shrewd and calculating It is sometimes difficult to believe that this surface picture of feminine serenity has built

¹¹³ *Career Woman* No. 12, 1965.

¹¹⁴ *Femina and Woman's Life* 18 August 1960, p. 33.

¹¹⁵ *Cape News* September, 1966.

¹¹⁶ *Fair Lady* 22 August 1973, p. 46.

the foundation of her business success on wile, deceit and frequently downright dishonesty.¹¹⁷

There were two elements contributing towards this understanding of the role of women. Firstly, differences between men and women and their appropriate roles in life were generally understood to be firmly rooted in biology. These biological differences, understood as timeless, were called upon to reinforce the existing division of labour by sex. Female biology, rather than male bias, was responsible for social arrangements determining that women's place was at home.¹¹⁸ A *Fair Lady* editorial of the late 1960s commented approvingly:

There are certain activities at which men are undeniably superior Their ability to concentrate on artistic creation or on the exercise of pure intellect and logic is greater ... the biological differences between men and women [are] exciting rather than depressing ... the fundamental relationship between men and women [is] one of dominance and submission ... for most women emotional security is only achieved through a degree of submission.¹¹⁹

Similarly, in 1968, the members of the Business and Professional Women's Club heard that women

may not be the same [as men] but perhaps one day they will be equal. They have different long term ambitions. They have different physical and mental reactions and they have different temperaments and metabolisms.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ *Argus* Clippings, 29 November 1967.

¹¹⁸ See Oakley for a discussion of the division of labour by sex (A. Oakley, *Housewife* (London: Penguin, 1990) pp. 157-221).

¹¹⁹ *Fair Lady* 5 March 1969, p. 149.

¹²⁰ *Career Woman* No. 21, 1968.

An editorial strongly opposed to the 'unnatural' idea of husbands helping around the home was favourably received by readers.¹²¹ One correspondent used biology to reinforce her case:

The sink in most homes is built for a woman's height. The tall woman is at a disadvantage, but it is her job to cope with the disadvantages ... and do the job that goes hand in hand with matrimony.¹²²

The second element in understanding perceptions of women's roles during the 1960s is the contemporary understanding that the entire framework of a coherent society rested on white women accepting their biological destinies. When married women left the home to go out to work, they were perceived to be "fugitives from responsibility" acting against their own "proper maternal instincts".¹²³ If, despite the social pressure to remain at home, they did go out to work, whether for financial or other reasons, the very fabric of society was threatened.

Widows and divorcees constituted a grave social problem precisely because they generally had to go out to work and were thus forced to 'neglect' their children. Married mothers who 'chose'¹²⁴ to work were indicted as responsible for many of the major social problems of the times, both in South Africa and elsewhere.

¹²¹ *Femina and Woman's Life* 13 September 1962, p. 10.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 8 November 1962, p. 13.

¹²³ *Fair Lady* 24 January 1968, p. 74.

¹²⁴ A woman who married in the early 1960s explained that working mothers were simply "running away from their responsibilities". Lack of money was no excuse to go out to work: if one did not have money one went without; 'good' housewives would cope somehow (R. Bain, interviewed by the author, Malmesbury, 24 December 1994).

In Britain, the policy of the Ministry of Health was actively to discourage mothers of pre-school children from working.¹²⁵ Klein pointed to the detrimental effect that British working mothers had on husbands and sons: where "the role of the father ... is devalued because he is incapable of being the sole provider, the psychological effect, particularly on sons, may be damaging."¹²⁶ Similar worries were expressed in South Africa. As the headmaster of a leading boy's school in Cape Town explained in an interview in 1966,

[t]he fellow who's reached the top can trace back his earlier success right to his school days. The boy in the soup is more likely than not to have a mother out of the kitchen.¹²⁷

A guest speaker at a Business and Professional Women's Club congress, also a headmaster, reinforced this. The report of his speech stated that "while he admires our aims and indeed the whole BPW movement, his feelings are that a woman's place is in the home." This individual continued by explaining that problem children came from problem homes, a problem home being one where both parents worked.¹²⁸ While agreeing that mothers could do no other than love their children "thanks to their glandular arrangements", motherly love was useless without the mother's presence.¹²⁹ The notion of 'problem' children

¹²⁵ Ministry of Health circular, 1968, cited in J. Brannen and P. Moss, "British Households after Maternity Leave" in S. Lewis, D. Israeli and H. Hootsman (eds), *Dual Earner Families: International Perspectives* (London: Sage Publications, 1992), p. 110.

¹²⁶ V. Klein, *Britain's Married Women Workers* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 147.

¹²⁷ *Fair Lady* 19 October 1966, p. 56.

¹²⁸ *Career Woman* No. 21, 1968.

¹²⁹ *Femina and Woman's Life* 12 April 1962, p. 67.

being created by a mother's neglect or absence (the two being essentially synonymous) was pervasive during the 1960s:

Mental troubles were caused by family and social instability ... working mothers who had not enough time for their children, many of whom are left to themselves or to younger members of the family.¹³⁰

Problems allegedly arising as a consequence of working mothers ranged from juvenile delinquency through to crime and alcoholism, as well as failure at school and decaying moral standards. The Business and Professional Women's Club's *Cape News* published an article about juvenile crime, arguing that the growth in affluence coincided with the growth in crime and that this was a product of mothers concerning themselves with matters other than those of the home.

Every member of the family was busy doing something, but not as a family. Children were not neglected materially yet lacked the emotional benefits that children used to derive from the home.¹³¹

A talk on alcoholism to Club members discussed the "role of woman as mother, guide and friend." It was allegedly women's duty to create a home that was tranquil and relaxed for their husbands, and to maintain "an atmosphere where children learned early principles and values of lasting value. It is the duty of women to ensure a climate where problem drinking does not arise."¹³² The same year saw the National Executive inform local clubs that "there is no doubt

¹³⁰ *Career Woman* No. 12, 1966.

¹³¹ *Cape News* June 1966.

¹³² *Ibid.*, August 1969.

that a good deal of juvenile insubordination stems from the absence of parental guidance and control at the most crucial stages of a child's life."¹³³

Experts, in the form of male paediatricians and psychiatrists, were employed to hammer home the point that parental (ie maternal) neglect damaged children. Churches could also be relied upon to contribute views that wifely neglect damaged husbands as well as children:

We are convinced that in the creation of man God created women as the helpmeet of man - that goes for all work of women The moment a woman starts to do a man's work it degrades both of them. A good woman at home inspires a man to go the right way ... and that's her main job.¹³⁴

Furthermore, working women were blamed by doctors, sociologists and specialists for a marked increase in impotency.¹³⁵ And "if a husband is soggy and dull, fat and unglamorous then in nine cases out of ten the wife is to blame."¹³⁶ Another series of articles entitled "How to keep your husband alive" pointed out that a husband's health was a wife's responsibility and something that ought not be shirked for both their sakes.

This series is addressed to women ... many women are widowed when their husbands are still in their 40s It is a waste of the husband's life ... it is an even greater waste of the wife's life. The purpose of her life is ended.¹³⁷

¹³³ *Career Woman* No. 24/25, 1969.

¹³⁴ Rev. J.D. Vorster, Minister of Tafelberg Pastorie, *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*, cited in *Fair Lady* 27 July 1966, p. 92.

¹³⁵ *Cape Times* 27 November 1971.

¹³⁶ *Femina and Woman's Life* 21 June 1962, p. 49.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2 August 1962, p. 26.

Another editorial emphasised that the success or failure of a marriage was largely a wife's job; it was at least seventy five per cent her responsibility to make it work.¹³⁸

The response to a letter on *Fair Lady's* problem page epitomised these perspectives on what women should or should not be doing. A young married woman with two children followed her husband from the city to a farm. As a consequence of the move she was forced to give up work and subsequently felt she was wasting her life. The response to her distress was as follows:

As an intelligent woman you should take yourself in hand and not allow yourself to become depressed. With a husband, two young sons and a home to think of you are certainly not wasting your life if you are mindful of your responsibilities and try to make a success of your duties as wife and mother. Going to work is no real solution, but rather an escape from the necessity of thinking for yourself.¹³⁹

Another individual asked for advice when she was offered "a very good job which I know I would enjoy doing. It would be a great challenge to me, and might even lead to the top of my profession." Her husband opposed her acceptance of the job and she wanted to resolve the dilemma. *Fair Lady's* response was blunt. Husbands' needs must come first. After all, no "man likes to come home, tired and possibly anxious, after a day's work, to find his wife in the same condition."¹⁴⁰ As one correspondent pointed out, 'real' women would be satisfied with domesticity:

From the birth of the human race, Woman has been biologically and temperamentally fitted to fulfil her primary

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10 February 1966, p. 8.

¹³⁹ *Fair Lady* 19 October 1966, p. 157.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 24 July 1968, p. 150.

functions of procreation and the subsequent rearing of succeeding generations. Any deviation from this appointed vocation is ... a violation of nature. Woman is Man's Heaven-ordained complement - not his competitor.¹⁴¹

Biology was further invoked to argue that women were physically, mentally and emotionally inadequate as employees relative to men. As an editorial pointed out,

[i]t is women who are the peacemakers, the homemakers, the world mother But oh fool woman ... you fight your heredity You are unqualified to compete with men Do men take days off because they are unwell? Do men burst into tears in the boardroom when things go wrong? Do men go off their work when they are in love? No. Man is single minded in his job. Love, home, all fade into their correct department until he is ready for them again. So don't get all big and ugly and militant ... don't be a tiger. Be a pussycat.¹⁴²

The local publication of an American journalist's blistering diatribe against feminist ideas indicated these notions had crossed the Atlantic, even if they met with little overt support among white South African women. The argument that 'womens libbers' were "dead wrong in their assumption[s]" was predicated on the view that women's roles were pre-ordained and inevitable, God-given rather than man-made; to question this was sheer lunacy. This anti-feminist polemic was met with approval in the South African media:

Where do they [feminists] get this lunatic idea that women would rather work for a boss than stay at home and run their own domain? The average normal woman derives a very basic happiness from performing these tasks The basic primary function of woman is to mate for the purposes of

¹⁴¹ *Femina and Woman's Life* 18 February 1960, p. 27.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 6 August 1970, p. 5.

reproduction Kate Millet can claim that gender identity is imposed by society ... this doesn't make it true.¹⁴³

These sentiments and pleas for women to attend to their biologically defined duties, to be "pussycats" rather than "tigers", pervaded the media. Clearly a substantial majority of opinion-makers felt that women belonged at home. Yet the very vehemence of these defences of the *status quo* indicates that, by the early 1970s, ideas were beginning to change; the very fact that these things were said at all points to a recognition that matters were not as they should be.

Venturing Into The Workforce: Changing Obligations

In the early 1960s, very few white married women had accepted paid employment outside the home; the issue of the working mother had barely arisen. These women were considered to work out of financial necessity; they merited pity, not condemnation. But by the early 1970s it was clear that this tiny minority could no longer be tolerated or ignored: they represented the thin end of a distinctly disagreeable wedge.

Signs of change had been there from the early 1960s for those who wished to see. As early as 1960 an article had pointed out that the "unpleasant phenomenon" of the married career woman was just beginning to be seen in South Africa.¹⁴⁴ A few years later another publication commented on the increasing numbers of married women entering the labour force. Even so, no major shifts in duties were anticipated, as it was understood that paid

¹⁴³ *Fair Lady* 23 June 1971, pp. 64-74.

¹⁴⁴ *Femina and Woman's Life* 18 August 1960, p. 31.

employment would not alter a wife's primary role in any substantial way. Women would only consider employment if their husbands wholeheartedly supported the idea, and if arrangements were such that hearth and home remained central:

When the couple are debating the question of a job for mother, the atmosphere is bound to be rather emotional. A man may feel affronted or inadequate She may feel guilty about even considering leaving the children Both may fret about what others will think Does your husband approve wholeheartedly? Some men are deeply, if silently hurt by their wives going out to work.¹⁴⁵

If husbands gave their approval, the article left little doubt as to where wives' priorities should lie:

Before you accept a job, make it clear to your prospective employer that if your children are ill you will have to stay away from work Obviously your children must come before your job It all boils down to simply showing your husband that he is, and always will be, the centre of your life.¹⁴⁶

By the early 1970s it was clear that dramatic changes had occurred in the workplace. In 1951 only one in ten of the white female labour force was married. Twenty years later this ratio was one in three.¹⁴⁷ Yet the vast

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 8 October 1964, p. 67.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹⁴⁷ J. van Rooyen, "Women and Careers" in The Manpower and Management Foundation of Southern Africa's *Womanpower: Perspectives for Better Utilisation* (Braamfontein: The Manpower and Management Foundation of Southern Africa, 1982), p. 10. Cock's figures also suggest dramatic change in this decade: the twenty four years from 1936 to 1960 saw the proportion of white women in the labour force grow from eighteen to twenty one per cent. The fifteen years between 1960 and 1975 saw the percentage climb to thirty four per cent (Cock, *Maids and Madams*, p. 250).

majority of these women were those aged thirty five or more, whose child care responsibilities had diminished as their offspring entered high school.¹⁴⁸

If a transformation had taken place in women's labour force participation, less change was evident on the domestic front. Women's obligations to men in terms of bearing children, and their sole responsibility to children in terms of nurturing and caring, remained largely intact. But if the allocation of duties proved resistant to change, there were signs that the way in which women fulfilled those duties could alter. While the vast majority resisted, others grudgingly conceded that married women with children could work if the conditions were right. Throughout the 1960s there had been a distinct, if tiny, minority supporting the right of mothers to work if they chose. When the Transvaal Women's Agricultural Union voted to ask the government "to introduce legislation to prevent mothers with children of schoolgoing age accepting paid employment outside the home",¹⁴⁹ they met with opposition from the Business and Professional Women's Club. In the same year the Club had conducted a debate over working mothers with family responsibilities:

Members were not able to agree as to how far children of less than three years of age could safely be denied the full time attention of the mother, and the discussion was therefore centred on schoolgoing children.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ A survey sponsored by BPW examining the availability of womanpower in the Republic observed that the vast majority of married women entering the work place were those aged thirty five or more (*Career Woman* No. 20, 1967, pp. 14-15).

¹⁴⁹ *Argus* Clippings, 19 September 1959.

¹⁵⁰ *Career Woman* No. 29, 1959.

Clearly, as early as 1959, a few women had felt that small children could be adequately cared for by someone other than the mother. Others however, felt differently, arguing that even children as old as twelve should never be exposed to the stimulation of anyone but 'mom', but that after that it was acceptable:

My concern is for the special class of women who often want to work ... the forty year old Now ... with her children and husband out of the house for the greater part of the day, she'd like to go back to work again I don't approve of the young married woman who has small children to care for going out to work The harm which she often does to her children and her home is incalculable.¹⁵¹

This point of view found favour in Business and Professional Women's Club circles. They expressed concern that the media "glamorised the role of wife and mother and laid no stress on the need for girls to continue their careers."¹⁵² The Club saw the need for "girls to continue their careers" in some way precisely because they could then return to work in their late thirties or early forties, when their children were off their hands.

Furthermore, despite the deluge of women's magazine articles inviting women to stay at home with children, dissenting voices were occasionally heard. For example, the article cited earlier, where a headmaster argued that mothers should stay at home, consisted largely of a rebuttal of his position through interviews with working women who had raised successful sons. Yet these mothers were all involved in establishment politics or charitable work, and as one pointed out, "women who do public work of any form, whether it's political or charitable, are an encouragement to their children, a good example".¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ *Fair Lady* 13 July 1966, p. 133.

¹⁵² *Career Woman* No. 18, 1967.

¹⁵³ *Fair Lady* 19 October 1966, p. 61.

Working mothers were tolerable as long as they did work that seemed to be an extension of their caring and nurturing roles, and only if their children were properly looked after. This was to become a much bigger issue during the 1970s as the numbers of working mothers continued to increase.

The trend for more and more women to work was given further impetus by nationalist calls for white women to alleviate the shortage of skilled labour in the context of a serious 'manpower' shortage during the 1960s. The Director of the National Institute for Personnel Research, Dr D. Gouws, pointed out that white women needed to join the labour force because "South Africa is so short of suitably trained manpower that the country is, in that respect, in a state of emergency."¹⁵⁴ The following year another leading parliamentarian raised concerns over the shortage of skilled labour, arguing that "South Africa needed to make greater use of its female labour potential".¹⁵⁵ In 1965 two more government officials urged women to go out to work in order to ease the 'manpower' shortage.¹⁵⁶ They found themselves strongly supported by the Deputy Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister just one week later.¹⁵⁷

However, if some state officials encouraged white women to enter the labour force, others were instructing them to breed more white babies. A conservative white trade union warned that it was "only a matter of time before the white race dies out" and bemoaned the existence of childless couples, broken homes

¹⁵⁴ *Argus* Clippings, 17 May 1963.

¹⁵⁵ The Administrator of Natal, cited in *Argus* Clippings, 20 February 1964.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5 February 1964 and 5 March 1965.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 10 March 1965.

and widows, "sitting with less than .4 of a child, not even half the replacement of the deceased fathers".¹⁵⁸ The most spectacular call, however, was in 1965, when the Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration, M.C. Botha, called for every "capable" white couple to "celebrate the Republic Festival with a baby." The Transvaal leader of the youth wing of the National Party thought this was too modest: he wanted all white couples between the ages of twenty and forty five to "produce a baby every year in future, not just one to celebrate Republic Festival next year."¹⁵⁹

But breeding white sons clearly partially conflicted with filling white male jobs in the workplace. The tension between the two ways in which women could support white supremacy was noted by a South African researcher. "Any labour policy could ill afford to ignore the equilibrium between its labour and homemaking forces."¹⁶⁰ Her warning was echoed by another political figure, Dr Connie Mulder, in 1967, who stated that "the birth rate and healthy family life of the nation was being threatened by the increasing employment of married women."¹⁶¹ In fact, even though the contraceptive pill had been available through the Department of Health since 1965, there was little impact on the white birth rate until the early 1970s.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ *Rand Daily Mail* 3 June 1964.

¹⁵⁹ *Star* 1 December 1965.

¹⁶⁰ Dina Wessels also believed that "realistic planning must exclude mothers with young children" (*Career Woman* No. 16, 1966).

¹⁶¹ Dr C. Mulder, cited in the *Cape Times* 24 June 1969 (South African Public Library: *Cape Times* Clippings).

¹⁶² E. Williams, *Where Have All The Children Gone?* (Johannesburg: Ernest Stanton Publishers, 1980), p. 23. Up until 1972 only doctors had been allowed to prescribe the pill. Allowing nurses to prescribe the pill in 1972 made it far more accessible. At the same time, increased state investment in family

The dilemma could be largely resolved by vigorously promoting contraception among blacks, and by qualifying the invitations to white women to take up paid employment. Thus, despite the perceived need for additional skilled white labour, the calls urging women to enter the labour force invariably emphasised that women were not "asked to become career girls instead of wives and mothers". Instead, although her "first responsibility was towards her family, it was possible for her to be a good wife and mother but at the same time to alleviate the manpower shortage."¹⁶³

The ideal way of fulfilling one's obligations to the *volk* and the family was for married mothers to take up part-time employment. British and American 'experts' simultaneously warmly recommended this as the ideal method of allowing women to work without distracting them from their domestic commitments.¹⁶⁴ South African politicians promoted this idea, emphasising that mornings-only work was preferable to other kinds of part-time employment, because it interfered least with women's 'proper' role.¹⁶⁵

The calls for white women to enter the labour force were infused with white supremacist sentiments. White women's entry into male-dominated jobs was

planning multiplied the five hundred clinics existing in 1970 to 2,045 in 1975 (*ibid.*, pp. 23-26).

¹⁶³ *Fair Lady* 7 February 1968, p. 125.

¹⁶⁴ A. Myrdal and V. Klein, *Women's Two Roles* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970) 2nd ed, p. 88; Klein, *Britain's Married*, p. 129; H. Gavron, *The Captive Wife: Conflicts of House-Bound Mothers* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 146.

¹⁶⁵ *Argus* Clippings, 12 September 1970; 17 September 1971.

hastened and encouraged by both the state and trade unions eager to avoid employing black labour in semi-skilled positions. In 1965 the Post Office began to consider employing white women because "the Postal Association is perturbed at the appointment of coloured postmen in increasing numbers because whites cannot be found for the work".¹⁶⁶ The following year it was reported that

[t]he 10,000 strong S.A. Electrical Workers Association is putting the finishing touches to a 'Human Rights' charter for women in Industry. The Association sees in white women the last hope of stopping a complete racial fragmentation of the engineering industry.¹⁶⁷

In 1967 further steps were taken by the electrical workers:

In a drive to prevent the electrical industry from 'going Black' and to ensure the future of white women workers in industry, the Electrical Workers' Union is to launch a campaign to ensure the proper training of female industrial labour.¹⁶⁸

Likewise, the South African Railways and Harbour Union began to encourage the recruitment of white women: "women are likely to take over checkers and store jobs on the railways where white manpower cannot be found."¹⁶⁹

Calls for women to enter the labour force must therefore be understood in the context of an ideology of white male supremacy. Those who exhorted women to enter the labour force were at pains to point out that paid employment should not interfere with domestic duties, and no-one was calling for white women to

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 12 April 1965.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 24 July 1966.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 27 October 1967.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 8 July 1971.

compete with white men. Instead, white women's paid employment was expected to complement that of white men in two ways. Firstly, by allowing and indeed encouraging white women to move into relatively unskilled and lower status jobs, more white men were available for jobs considered to be more highly skilled and demanding. Senator Wessels made this explicit in his call for white women to take up paid employment when he advised potential employers that "women were suited for repetitive work".¹⁷⁰ Similarly, when the Post Office began to employ women, company officials reported that, often "a woman's hand is more sensitive for delicate work. Repetitious, routine work which can be boring for a technically trained man, is not so for a woman."¹⁷¹ Where women moved into lower level positions in the workplace, therefore, little threat was seen to male domination.

Secondly, the boom years of the 1960s saw the number of job vacancies for whites in most skilled and professional categories increase dramatically.¹⁷² For white trade unions, and in the interests of capital, as well as the apartheid state, training white women to fill these positions served to protect and increase the

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 5 February 1965.

¹⁷¹ *Cape Times* Clippings, 26 June 1973.

¹⁷² The unemployment rate for whites expressed as a percentage of the economically active population was a tiny 0.2 per cent in 1970 (*South Africa: An Appraisal* (The Nedbank Group, 1983) p. 48). Furthermore, the early years of the boom had seen new skilled positions filled 'naturally' through white population growth and white immigration. By the later 1960s the increase in the white population was insufficient to fill the ever increasing number of skilled posts - by 1971 the shortage was estimated at 95,655 positions (J. Saul and S. Gelb, *The Crisis in South Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986), p. 72).

domination of whites in the workplace, without threatening the supremacy of white males.

Articles in the media during the 1960s frequently focused on the fact that such women were the first to invade a traditionally male field. Most of these women accepted relatively unskilled work at low levels. Where women attempted to enter the male world at the top, however, it was a different story. Miss E.G. McLaren's application for membership of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange in 1962 provoked passionate resistance.¹⁷³ The very idea of a woman stockbroker was anathema to the totally male membership, and petitions were swiftly drawn up to resist the female invader.¹⁷⁴ Just one month later it was recorded that her application was unsuccessful.¹⁷⁵

While well paid, high status jobs were vigorously defended by white men, by the early 1970s the walls barring women from men's jobs were beginning to display a few hair-line cracks. Resistance towards appointing women in more responsible and more highly skilled positions showed signs of decay when, in 1971, Dianne Howard was appointed as Cape Town's first female bank manager, and only the second in the country.¹⁷⁶ The same year also witnessed

¹⁷³ *Argus* Clippings, 19 May 1962.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 26 May 1962.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 13 June 1962. It was reported that "the idea of a feminine foot in the door aroused strong opposition".

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 2 October 1971.

the election of the first woman to the executive committee of the Cape Clothing Manufacturers' Association.¹⁷⁷

While middle-level and high-level jobs remained the preserve of the exceptional, lower status jobs could be ceded to white women. The first three female bank tellers in Cape Town were reported as having "shown that women bank tellers are as good as men in a job formerly considered a male preserve".¹⁷⁸ Indeed, in low status jobs, women could often be more effective than men. A car dealer experimenting with employing white sales women explained the advantages:

The buyer of the more expensive model is usually the more mature business executive who likes a little attention from an attractive women ... at present our woman demonstrators are employed only as showroom receptionists If the scheme is successful ... we may entrust the women with full scale car demonstrations. For a salary of R100 a month you cannot get a very good male car salesman, but you can get a charming and capable woman.¹⁷⁹

By 1964 it was revealed that new regulations for the South African Police provided for the appointment of the first white female police officers, although, as with other female state employees, marriage meant voluntary retirement.¹⁸⁰ The first white woman crane drivers and lorry drivers were employed by ISCOR in 1971.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 25 September 1971.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 7 September 1963.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 18 November 1961.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 6 March 1964.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 23 December 1971.

Calls for white women to enter part-time employment fitted far more neatly into the scenario of white women entering subordinate rather than superior positions in the workplace. Part-time employment rarely leads to promotion into management: such work constituted little threat to male domination in the workplace. Most calls for women to enter the labour force emphasised that paid employment should not affect their domestic responsibilities; part-time work enabled mothers and wives to combine those duties with their duties to the white supremacist state. Indeed, domestic roles could be enhanced insofar as money was earned to provide 'luxuries' for their families. The general acceptance of the idea that women's paid employment represented 'pin money' meant that there was minimal pressure on white women to earn full-time wages.

It is the husband's duty to take on the care of the finance in the home ... when the wife works her earnings should be pooled ... at the same time, it should be a rule that money brought in by a wife should be used only to cover extras Disaster will thus be avoided when she has to stop work because a baby is coming, or she must meet the demands of existing children.¹⁸²

Klein's study similarly revealed that British women worked to increase the standard of living of their families, regarding their incomes as 'pocket money' or 'extras' rather than as a means of keeping the wolf from the door.¹⁸³ South African wives who earned money, either as part-time, or even as full-time employees, were sternly warned not to use their earnings for household necessities. The earnings of the wife should be considered as supplementary to the main income in order to maintain the husband's position as head of the household. "As for wages - save them. It is essential that you are able to live

¹⁸² *Femina and Woman's Life* 18 July 1963, p. 73. See also *Southern Life's The Next Fifty Years*.

¹⁸³ Klein, *Britain's Married*, p. 38.

on his income".¹⁸⁴ In those rare cases where a wife's earnings approached or even surpassed her husband's, marital disaster could be avoided, as "clever wives could conceal their earnings."¹⁸⁵ Another correspondent pointed out how she prevented her earnings from impacting on her husband's position as the breadwinner:

If I should want clothes ... my husband and I discuss it and, if it is not extravagant, my husband agrees. In this way he retains his position as the breadwinner and I retain my independence while relying on his judgement.¹⁸⁶

As in British households,¹⁸⁷ South African husbands frequently concealed their earnings from their wives. A magazine article pointed out that "[i]t is not uncommon for the blushing bride to be unaware of her brand new husband's salary". It explained that women did not understand how important it was for a man to be financially independent. Minor incidents over money might "set off waves of self doubt about his masculinity"; thus women were urged to "remember, a man works hard for the salary he brings home and he'd like you to handle it with due regard for the effort that went into earning it."¹⁸⁸

While women's magazines had supported the idea of a life of domesticity for white women, except in cases of dire financial need, they had recommended earning 'pin money' from home since the early 1960s. The problem pages of

¹⁸⁴ *Femina and Woman's Life* 8 October 1964, p. 71.

¹⁸⁵ *Fair Lady* 29 September 1971, p. 87.

¹⁸⁶ *Femina and Woman's Life* 14 July 1966, p. 12.

¹⁸⁷ Gavron, *The Captive Wife*, p. 138.

¹⁸⁸ *Fair Lady* 27 October 1971, p. 127.

these magazines contain numerous letters from wives unable to extract sufficient housekeeping money from their husbands.¹⁸⁹ According to these letters, husbands frequently earned enough to 'keep' a wife and family, but were reluctant to part with the money. The solution to this dilemma, according to the advice columns, was to beg. "Choose a time when your husband is relaxed and put the matter to him as logically and calmly as possible".¹⁹⁰ If that did not work, instructions were given as to how to budget more effectively.¹⁹¹ If husbands still would not or could not produce the money, then wives had a duty to their families to take matters into their own hands. If going out to work was out of the question, as it was for so many, then staying at home and using a hobby to generate a little extra cash provided a real alternative.¹⁹²

Many full-time housewives adopted these ideas and developed small scale money-making activities. A married woman who started a stall on her husband's farm in 1972 explained that she had done this in order to *help* her husband. Pin money for white housewives equalled family wages for black men for at least some households in South Africa:

Well, how it started was when my husband was farming, and he grew veggies and we had table grapes, and in the season we used to have this trestle table and we used to sell the grapes,

¹⁸⁹ See, for example, the problem pages of *Femina and Woman's Life* 5 January 1961, p. 45; 7 December, 1961, p. 49 and *Fair Lady* February 1966, p. 143.

¹⁹⁰ See, for example, *Fair Lady* February 1966, p. 143.

¹⁹¹ See, for example, *Femina and Woman's Life* 5 January 1961, p. 45.

¹⁹² For example, in the space of one year, a single magazine advised women that housekeeping money could be eked out by supplementing it through knitting, sewing, typing, baby sitting and crocheting (*Femina and Woman's Life*, 1963).

just at weekends really ... and then we had all the left overs and things and I had to think ... what are we going to do with all the surplus we've got, with the things we had left over? So I started from there really We actually opened our first stall to pay our labourers' wages.¹⁹³

While racial hierarchies remained rock-solid, gender hierarchies were becoming a little more fluid. The early 1970s saw entrepreneurship beginning to emerge as a distinct possibility for white women. As opposed to part-time employment, or employment in large corporations or institutions, the media seized on the idea of married women working in partnership with their husbands. But it was made abundantly clear that husbands remained firmly in charge. 1970 saw *Fair Lady* focus on several couples who had started their own businesses or who worked together freelancing. A Graphic design studio established by Janice and Paul Ashby was the first business to be featured. Even though the studio was named after Janice Ashby, her husband commented complacently that "anyone who works with us knows that Janice Ashby wouldn't survive without Paul Ashby".¹⁹⁴

Of two journalists who worked together, Penny and Dennis Gordon, it was pointed out approvingly that "she respects his seniority and guidance. She has the right attitude to make their working/marriage relationship harmonious".¹⁹⁵ The wife in another couple, the academics Jean and John Comaroff, was

¹⁹³ Judy Badenhorst, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 16 February 1993.

¹⁹⁴ *Fair Lady* 4 March 1970, p. 21. A decade later a *Fair Lady* report stated that Janice Ashby's design studio went from strength to strength after she divorced her husband in the mid-1970s (22 October 1980).

¹⁹⁵ *Fair Lady* 4 March 1970, p. 23.

commended because "her husband's career is far more important than her own ... if it ever came to choosing between her projects and his she would certainly choose his."¹⁹⁶

Female entrepreneurship which, in contrast to that of men, was widely understood to mean working from home turning hobbies into pin-money, was taken a step further in 1971 by another magazine, *Close Up*. The first article featuring women working for themselves interviewed four females "who had opted out of the office scene and set up on their own".¹⁹⁷ The women concerned were a weaver, a fabric designer and a jewellery designer, as well as a woman who restored and repaired old china. The weaver, the only married woman among the four, regarded her activities as a hobby that supplemented her husband's income, and allowed her to fulfil all her domestic responsibilities. The other three, all single women, were perceived to be entitled to work as they pleased as they had, as yet, no domestic responsibilities.¹⁹⁸

Home-based entrepreneurship, like part-time work, permitted a wife to assist with household finances while still fulfilling all her domestic duties, thus requiring little change in the mutual obligations and responsibilities imposed by marriage and convention on wives. The married women encouraged to alleviate the skilled labour shortage were those who had tertiary training. Turning hobbies into cash, on the other hand, provided possibilities for those who had no such training.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Close Up* 10 September 1971, p. 34.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

All over the country there are women nursing secret ambitions and often undiscovered talents: 'I've always wanted to write ... act ... design! I'd love to one day but, of course, I can't - I don't have the time ... the money ... the training, and there's the children and my husband...' These things need not prevent a woman from fulfilling *her other* ambitions. All it takes is determination.¹⁹⁹

Evidently, home-based entrepreneurship for women did not mean losing sight of home and hearth and the responsibilities those entailed. Instead, it simply revealed new ways of combining work and home, in much the same way as part-time work, with neither requiring much change in husbands' roles.

Taking entrepreneurship one step further in the late 1960s and early 1970s were a few Cape Town women who ran 'little' shops in Rondebosch, a Cape Town suburb.²⁰⁰ The marital status and age of most of these women is unrecorded, although one evidently helped in her husband's furniture shop. The others, who sold baby clothes, flowers, gifts and crafts, were highly commended by the media for not being "high powered", and for running their businesses "on a very personal level" in an "intimate and village type atmosphere" that was uncommercialised.²⁰¹

While these women may or may not have had breadwinning husbands, unmarried, widowed or divorced women were forced back onto their own resources, with little choice about whether to work or not. In 1973 it was

¹⁹⁹ *Modern Woman* June 1972, p. 30 (my emphasis).

²⁰⁰ *Argus* Clippings, 13 April 1973.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

revealed that "the number of white divorces has doubled since the early 60s".²⁰² Those divorcees with children were confronted by the challenge of trying to be a 'good' mother (by remaining with their offspring) while at the same time earning an income to support those children. A mother with three small children, who had been forced to give up work when she married, found herself compelled to find some way of earning money after her divorce in 1969:

Anyway, my marriage came unstuck ... and obviously I had to start working again, and I got straight into teaching, in fact I started a little school down in Hermanus, that was where I went to live, that was where my father was I was absolutely penniless and I had three small children, so I went to go and stay at Hermanus to pick myself up all over again, and I instantly started a little nursery school The boot of my car became a sort of office, and my boys were by now at primary school, and my little daughter came to school with me.²⁰³

For this woman, opening a school allowed her to be with her older children when they returned home from school, and even enabled her to take the smallest child to work with her.

If employed women remained a minority, even in the early 1970s, they were beginning to be an acceptable minority. This acceptance was based on the way in which they joined the labour force, building paid work around the home and children. If many of those blessed with a man were able to evade paid work altogether, others sought their husbands' permission to accept employment, choosing part-time work if it was available, as it interfered least with domestic commitments. Those without bread-winning husbands attempted to earn money

²⁰² *Report on Marriages and Divorces, 1973*, p. viii.

²⁰³ Elizabeth Murray, Interview, 16 June 1993.

in ways that took them away from home the least, both men and women agreeing that women's primary role remained a domestic one.

Conclusion

The period 1960 - 1973 represented, for most South African whites, the 'golden years' of the apartheid state. Starting with the State of Emergency banning the major black resistance movements, it was an era of sustained economic growth alongside substantial real growth rates of white incomes. The expansion of domestic manufacturing and production saw demand for skilled labour increase, until by the mid-1960s, as economic growth continued apace, a chronic shortage of skilled white labour began to perturb opinion-makers.

The early years of the economic boom saw society's highest aspirations for white women revolve around marriage, procreation and nurturing, with distinct boundaries between white men's role as economic provider, and white women's role as unpaid but eager supporter. For white wives, working outside the home was a last resort, only to be considered when husbands failed to fulfil their breadwinning obligations, reflecting badly on husbands and wives alike.

By the mid-1960s, in the context of the skilled labour shortage, it became more acceptable for white women to 'help' their husbands and the white supremacist state through part-time employment. By the end of the 1960s, the earlier hegemonic ideology of domesticity had adapted to incorporate the labour needs of the capitalist economy. If the early 1960s saw marriage and paid employment outside the home for white women as diametrically opposed, by the

end of the decade, it appeared to be women's duty to be wives, mothers and pin money earners simultaneously.

If the perceived shortage of white males drew white women into the labour force, it also encouraged white women to accept jobs previously forbidden them. The change was considered so dramatic that those with a vested interest in promoting women's employment could announce triumphantly:

Women can choose from a wide field Industry ... has many doors and only those are shut which would be detrimental to the health of women as bearers of the race.²⁰⁴

Yet closer examination reveals that much of this change was cosmetic and superficial. Women who chose work over the family were labelled as 'freaks'. Whether white women took up paid employment or not, the family and the home were expected to remain central. The vast majority of those who did take up employment outside the home found themselves in low level, low status, and poorly paid jobs. Working outside the home simply meant replacing one form of subordination with another. Almost all wives who worked, worked for men - escaping from the domination of personal patriarch in the home to an impersonal one in the workplace. And if the women who took up paid employment had two patriarchs, they also had two jobs; paid work did not mean a reduction in unpaid housework. If the imaginary signs announcing 'men only', erected in front of the doors to the world of paid work, began to be pulled down during the 1960s, the ones saying 'women only' in front of the home remained firmly in place. But from the early 1970s, world-wide recession, combined with

²⁰⁴ BPW's National Convenor for Women's Employment, cited in *Career Woman* No. 36, 1973.

domestic economic and political turmoil, provided women with the chance to do some sign writing of their own, to build on the foundations laid in the 1960s.

Chapter Two

Leaving Home and Breaking The Barriers: Continuity and Change 1974-1984

*Now this is a song to celebrate
The conscious liberation of the female state!
Mothers - daughters and their daughters too.
Woman to woman we're singing with you
The "inferior sex" got a new exterior
We've got doctors, lawyers, politicians too.
Everybody - take a look around
Can you see - can you see - can you see,
there's a woman right next to you.¹*

Oh yes I'm wise, I am strong, I am invincible - I am woman.²

The 1960s and early 1970s had seen white women, particularly married women and mothers, beginning to move into paid employment in increasing numbers. This trend was continued and consolidated over the later 1970s and early 1980s. White women comprised thirty per cent of the white labour force in 1970, and forty three per cent by 1980. In 1970, one out of three employed white women was married. By 1981 this had increased to almost one out of two.³ As in the

¹ D.N.A Ltd., B.M.G. Music Publishing, c. 1984.

² Helen Reddy, mid-'70s.

³ J. van Rooyen, "Women and Careers" in The Manpower and Management Foundation of Southern Africa's *Womanpower: Perspectives for Better Utilisation* (Braamfontein: The Manpower and Management Foundation of Southern Africa, 1982), p. 10.

earlier period, the vast bulk of these were women who had stopped working when they had children, and who were re-entering the labour market once they had reached their mid-thirties.⁴

Not only were more women, particularly married women, working, but the range of jobs open to them also increased considerably during the 1970s. To a degree, as in the '60s, women moved into the labour force through entry at low-level jobs, often replacing white men. For example, the number of women in administrative and clerical jobs rose by thirty per cent between 1973 and 1983, while the number of men in these jobs fell by almost twelve per cent.⁵

However, at the same time, women were also moving up the ladder into higher status and higher paid positions. In 1973 just over 76,500 white women were categorised as professional, semi-professional and technical.⁶ By 1983 this figure had risen to just under 113,000, an increase of forty eight per cent.⁷

The 1970s also saw women firmly establishing themselves in managerial and executive positions. The number of white women in these categories grew from

⁴ A. Steyn, "Problems of Dual Career Women" (Paper presented at the Women's Legal Status Committee Conference, Johannesburg, 1980), p. 1.

⁵ Department of Labour, *Manpower Survey* No. 10, 1973 (np: Government Printer, nd), p. 3; Department of Manpower, *Manpower Survey* Vol. 1, No. 15, 1983 (Pretoria: Government Printer, nd), p. 10.

⁶ *Manpower Survey* No. 10, 1973, p. 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*; *Manpower Survey* No. 15, 1983, p. 8. The increase for men in the same category was forty six per cent.

just over 8,400 in 1973⁸ to nearly 23,000 in 1983,⁹ an increase of over 174 per cent.

The contrast between the business world of the mid-1960s and that of the mid-1970s was made explicit by a journalist writing for *Commerce*:

Ten years ago my contribution to a national magazine series on working women was supposed to be "Power Women of South Africa". Actually it didn't work out that way. I couldn't find any No matter where I searched Big Business was, I found, safely and solidly trousered.¹⁰

The National Manpower Commission had also observed the changes occurring in the workplace, noting that in 1985 thirty seven per cent of those in 'high-level' jobs were women. In 1971 only thirty two per cent had been women. There had been a significant increase in the number of female scientists, lawyers, doctors and accountants.¹¹

There was indeed. In 1974 the *Commerce* journalist cited above was able to identify a dozen executive women. In 1984, *Fair Lady* identified 869 highly placed, overwhelmingly white, working women.¹² Admittedly, many worked in

⁸ *Manpower Survey* No. 10, 1973, p. 3.

⁹ *Manpower Survey* No. 15, 1983, p. 9. For men in the same category, the increase was just thirty seven per cent.

¹⁰ *Commerce* July 1974, p. 24.

¹¹ 'High-level manpower' was defined as two or more years post-matriculation training (Department of Manpower, *High-Level and Middle-Level Manpower in South Africa: Recent Developments* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1987), pp. 3 and 10).

¹² Supplement to *Fair Lady* 3 October 1984.

areas considered 'traditional' for women, but they had often reached the top of their professions. Professors of drama appeared alongside company directors and financial consultants. The head of UNISA's social work department featured next to an internationally acclaimed shark expert and a veterinary surgeon. While the president of the S.A. Society of Physiotherapists appeared, so too did several directors of engineering firms. There were also female business analysts and consultants, physicists and stockbrokers, ecologists and lawyers, insurance brokers, cytogeneticists and microbiologists.¹³

Thus the 1970s saw the world of paid employment transformed from a domain whose higher echelons were overwhelmingly occupied and dominated by white men to one which featured both men and women, although it remained ruled by white men. The context was one of declining economic growth and increasing political instability. Externally, political changes in the states surrounding South Africa were represented as posing a threat to South African political and economic stability. Worldwide recession following the OPEC oil crisis of 1973 impacted adversely on South African growth rates.¹⁴ Internally, the 1976 Soweto uprising (precipitating widespread capital flight), combined with heightened black worker militancy, contributed to ongoing political, economic and social instability. The high growth rates of the earlier period dropped to less than two per cent per year from 1974.¹⁵ As, from 1974, inflation rates

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ S. Terreblanche and N. Nattrass, "A Periodisation of the Political Economy from 1910" in N. Nattrass and E. Ardington (eds), *The Political Economy of South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 16.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

reached double figures,¹⁶ the growth of real wages and salaries for white employees displayed a negative trend for the first time.¹⁷

Economic and political change was accompanied by social transformation. By 1974, World Population Year, the Family Planning movement of South Africa had begun to have an impact on white birth-rates, and from the early 1970s the average size of families started to decrease.¹⁸ In South Africa, almost 89,000 white babies were born in 1970, only 80,000 were born in 1975, and fewer than 75,000 in 1980.¹⁹ The 1960s average, of three children per family, fell by a third to two children by the late 1970s.²⁰ As Family Planning clinics sprouted around the Republic during the 1970s, effective birth control became more widely available and more acceptable.

Gradual changes in ideology partnered fluctuating economic, political and social conditions. The impact of feminist ideas could be seen in the lyrics of popular songs asserting women's right to self-determination. In the early 1970s, in the United States and Europe, the 'Wages for Housewives' campaigns drew much

¹⁶ *South Africa: An Appraisal* (Johannesburg: Nedbank Group Economic Unit, 1973), p. 17.

¹⁷ M. McGrath, "Economic Growth, Income Distribution and Social Change" in Nattrass and Ardington, *The Political Economy*, p. 92. See also *South Africa: An Appraisal* (The Nedbank Group, 1983), p. 256.

¹⁸ E. Williams, *Where Have All The Children Gone?* (Johannesburg: Ernest Stanton Publishers, 1980), p. 23.

¹⁹ Department of Statistics, *Report on Births, 1970* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1973), p. 3; Department of Statistics, *Report on Births, 1975* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1977), p. 33; Department of Statistics, *Report on Births, 1980* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1983), p. 45.

²⁰ Williams, *Where Have All The Children Gone?*, p. 4.

support, as large numbers of women expressed their dissatisfaction with the ideal of the housewife's lifelong labour of love.²¹ In South Africa, concern over the deteriorating status attached to housewifery was expressed by the Business and Professional Women's Club in 1980, when, in a telling statement, they announced their support for women choosing to stay at home: "we regard running a home and bringing up children as a stimulating challenge - a vocation and not a drudgery".²² So low was the status attached to non-working wives, that 1983 was designated the Year of the Housewife in an effort to offset prevailing opinion.²³

Breaking a Few of the Barriers: Education and Employment

As employment was beginning to be more difficult to find,²⁴ the decline in white incomes meant that it was becoming increasingly important for white wives to earn.²⁵ Working wives, relatively scarce during the earlier period, were increasingly common during the later 1970s; more and more women were going out to work, and some were evidently beginning to climb the corporate ladder. The response from women's magazines was to expand the space allocated to working women. While the women's magazines of the 1960s featured but a few

²¹ A. Oakley, *Housewife* (London: Penguin, 1974), p. 226.

²² *Career Woman* No. 54, 1980.

²³ *Forum* Vol. 3, No. 2, 1983. This periodical was published by the Women's Bureau from 1982 - 1985, whereafter its name was changed to *Focus*.

²⁴ Terreblanche and Natrass "A Periodisation", p. 16.

²⁵ In 1979, the real per capita income of whites was lower than in 1971 (*South Africa: an Appraisal*, p. 68).

working women, the 1970s saw the publication of regular articles featuring such women, to the point that they became an integral part of, for example, *Fair Lady's* format.

The newspapers were slightly slower to adapt their reporting styles. As during the late 1960s and early 1970s, articles in the press continued to express surprise at white women's invasion of what were perceived to be traditionally male jobs:

Hundreds of women in South Africa are taking advantage of the shortage of skilled and semi-skilled manpower to break through the 'men only' barrier in jobs. They have invaded traditional male preserves in the South African Railways, the Post Office, ISCOR and even the Navy.²⁶

There was a similar fascination with women employed in what were considered to be physically tough jobs, or in occupations where they might get dirty:

Scores of occupations, such as crane, bus and truck driving, electronics, radio assembly and car repairing are now bowing to 'petticoat power' There are now woman welders and iron moulders ... armature winders ... motor mechanics."²⁷

In a similar vein, it was observed that the first qualified female tool cutter and grinder was recognised by the Amalgamated Engineering Union in 1975.²⁸

²⁶ South African Public Library: *Argus* Clippings File: "Women" (hereafter *Argus* Clippings), 3 February 1974. See also J. Cock, E. Emdon and B. Klugman, *Child Care and The Working Mother: A Sociological Investigation of a Sample of Urban African Women*, Carnegie Conference Paper, Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa (Cape Town: SALDRU, University of Cape Town, 1984), p. 5, which makes an observation about images of white women working as crane drivers at ISCOR.

²⁷ *Argus* Clippings, 3 February 1974.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 15 May 1975.

Yet, as the number of occupations untarnished by 'petticoat power' diminished, so reporting styles were forced to adapt. Instead of the 'newsworthy firsts' - the first female welder, the first female bank manager - much of the media broadened its framework with regard to women working. As early as 1973 *Fair Lady* had published a set of interviews with women who had become successful businesswomen, all earning good salaries, all in positions of responsibility, ranging from freelance artists to the manageress of the Cape Town branch of a national firm with forty employees, who ran an expense account and a company car.²⁹ The following year saw *Fair Lady*'s publication of a series of articles called "Women of our Time", beginning with Judge Leo van den Heever.³⁰ The series featured four female doctors, an investigative reporter, the Director of the National Council for Child Welfare and the Director of the Johannesburg Art Gallery.

Whereas the 1960s features on working women focused almost exclusively on those employed within the caring or nurturing professions, a 1975 article saw the first interviews with a female chemical engineer, a lawyer, a bank manager, a store manager, an administration manager and a construction company director.³¹ While these women were sandwiched between dieticians, fashion designers, personnel officers and entertainers, as well as nurses and educators, their presence on *Fair Lady*'s pages represented and reflected very real social trends. 1975 saw *Darling* publish a "School Leavers' Special" that stressed the need for female matriculants to train. It provided information about a variety of

²⁹ *Fair Lady* 5 September 1973, pp. 110-120.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 6 February 1974, pp. 90-93.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 5 February 1975, pp. 3 ff.

careers or jobs, by interviewing women engaged in occupations ranging from modelling to hotel management and from retailing to journalism.³² The following year two 'lady executives' told how they had made it to the 'big time' in advertising and fashion.³³ A few years later marine biology was espoused as "another new career option for women".³⁴

That these women were not totally isolated in the new fields is clear from the manpower surveys. Between 1973 and 1983 the number of white female engineers jumped from fifteen to 118, female geologists climbed from seven to forty two, accountants from twenty five to 217.³⁵ By 1978 the Johannesburg Stock Exchange was prepared (or forced) to accept the election of the first woman stockbroker as well as the first woman trader, sixteen years after having vetoed the first female application.³⁶ If the women entering these distinctly male preserves remained tiny minorities, they were at least beginning to destroy the clear-cut boundaries between men's and women's employment that had dominated the work place during the 1960s.

³² *Darling* 29 October 1975, pp. 82-89.

³³ *Ibid.*, 29 September 1976, pp. 58-61.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 12 November 1980, pp. 10-12, 14 ff.

³⁵ *Manpower Survey* No. 10, 1973 and No. 15, 1983. These figures may understate the total numbers as they only count those employed.

³⁶ South African Public Library: *Cape Times* Clippings, 2 and 3 February 1978.

Careers information and vocational guidance responded to the changing demands and trends of the workplace.³⁷ The kind of advice given girls broadened during the '70s to include the new jobs that were becoming available to women. For example, a careers information publication by *Fair Lady* featured females as chemical engineers, electrical engineers, pathologists, motor mechanics, financial directors and stock brokers.³⁸ The following year saw women advised to enter the world of computers where they could become programmers, operators, systems engineers, systems executives or consultants.³⁹

Evidently the 1970s saw substantial changes. Yet in many respects change was superficial, serving simply to conceal the continuity with the earlier period. For example, in stark contrast to the 1960s, formal careers guidance for matriculants was available in some schools from the beginning of the 1970s.⁴⁰ But even by the late 1970s the quality of advice given to both girls and boys was extremely limited:

One of the things that struck me ... in 1979 was the limited experience of the teachers who do career guidance in schools. They are teachers for whom teaching is the height of their aspiration; they assume that everyone would want to go to university and write off those who do not, and they know nothing about commerce and anything that does not need

³⁷ Barbara Hall, Personal Correspondence, 25 September 1993. Hall, a careers counsellor, argued that changing career guidance was a response to pressure from commerce and industry to minimise the skill shortage.

³⁸ *Fair Lady* 5 December 1979, pp. 118-127.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 27 February 1980, pp. 60-64.

⁴⁰ Barbara Hall, Personal Correspondence, 25 September 1993.

university training (and only a limited amount about careers which do).⁴¹

And several women remembered receiving little or no careers guidance. "There was no careers guidance at school - nothing. I left school in '75 and I didn't know what to do",⁴² recalled one white woman. Another informant, an athlete who had won her Springbok colours, confirmed this observation when she remembered the advice she was given: "I was told, my headmistress called me in and she said, 'you've got to decide, either you have a sporting or an academic career'".⁴³

The existence of formal guidance structures in schools seems to have had relatively little impact on women's career choices.⁴⁴ Most school-leavers, as during the 1960s, acquired information regarding job possibilities from their families, their communities, and from the media. Some found their families deciding for them, relieving them of the responsibility of choice:

It was my stepmother who finally decided what I would do after school. With no career guidance as such at our school, I ... went through matric without making concrete plans, until eventually my stepmother could stand it no longer ... [and]

⁴¹ *Ibid.* See also J. Cock, *Maids And Madams* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1980), p. 126: in a survey conducted in 1978/79, only twenty per cent of parents would choose university for their daughters, while sixty per cent chose it for their sons.

⁴² K. Dovey, L. Laughton and J. Durandt, *Working in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985), p. 271.

⁴³ Angela Swain, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 15 June 1993.

⁴⁴ See Dovey et al, *Working*, for interviews with working women. Many of the women interviewed said they had little or no career guidance in schools. For most of these, it is unclear when they were actually at school, although one, an air hostess, must have left school about 1974/5 (p. 380).

arranged an Education Department bursary, and next thing I knew I was in Stellenbosch - and I am eternally grateful to her for that.⁴⁵

Others found the mediocre advice provided by schools largely useless:

There was also not much in the way of careers guidance; our deputy head-mistress let us do a few silly aptitude tests I was told to do just about anything other than medicine, which made me decide to do medicine.⁴⁶

While many schools effectively wasted their female pupils' time,⁴⁷ the media remained a key source of information about possible careers. Despite the presence of articles discussing engineering for women, the press tended to reinforce the ideology of domesticity. For every article discussing technical work, there were several that recommended secretarial work or typing courses. Courses offered by the Department of National Education were advertised in the media, presenting women with the choice between classes in cookery, dress-making, finance in the home, music, art and literature.⁴⁸ Given that the Department of National Education was also responsible for career guidance in state schools, it seems probable that formal advice restricted and limited women's awareness of the alternatives to domesticity.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 381.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 336: an informant recalled that they were supposed to have a vocational guidance class once a week, but that three-quarters of the time it was a free lesson, and the rest of the time it was 'half-hearted'.

⁴⁸ *Fair Lady* 31 January 1979, pp. 56-57.

For many, the advice they received channelled them into the age-old areas considered suitable for women: entertaining or caring.

I just didn't know what to do after school; my mother had booked me into UCT to do speech and drama, but I was such an otherwise adolescent ... I didn't do it, and I waitressed and fuffed around for a year after I left school, didn't quite know what I wanted to do ... and one day I [thought] if I put all this energy into something worthwhile ... and I ... went off on this nursing.⁴⁹

Thus both formal and informal careers advice failed to mount a substantial challenge to traditional ideas of appropriate roles for women, despite cries for more South African technicians, engineers and so on. Even those women who were technically qualified often found themselves struggling to get work in their fields. A female geologist, the only woman in her class, struggled to find work despite having come top of her class in 1974. Companies recruiting geologists gave her this advice:

One of them said that if I went back and did a draughting course they would employ me as a draughtsman. The other said that I could do a secretarial course and it would be a very useful role for me as a very well informed secretary ... or a librarian, I could be, I could do two more years and become a librarian.⁵⁰

As in the 1960s, teaching, and especially nursery school teaching, was espoused as particularly suitable for girls as "of all the professions open to women this was one which fitted her best for her role as mother."⁵¹ But teaching, for white South African women, was hardly a long term secure career. One analyst

⁴⁹ Deborah Smith, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 17 February 1993.

⁵⁰ Jenny Marot, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 26 October 1993.

⁵¹ *Cape News* August 1974.

described female teachers as "3rd class professionals - as temporary staff", because once they married they could not "be promoted, are subject to 24 hours notice in three provinces [and] risk losing their jobs to new teachers fresh from college". Even in the fourth province, the Cape, married teachers who were bread-winners had yearly contracts, and their posts had to be re-advertised each year.⁵² Even so, a woman who went to university to study a B.Sc. discovered that her parents were pleased about her course of study because "they thought that it would actually be a suitable kind of degree, it would lead to me being able to teach eventually."⁵³ A large number of women continued to do precisely this. The number of white female teachers increased from 29,000 in 1973 to over 44,390 by 1983, an increase of almost fifty three per cent.⁵⁴

If teaching remained a popular choice for women, so too did nursing. The number of white female nurses had swollen from 22,000 in 1973 to 30,600 in 1983, an increase of thirty nine per cent, while the number of male nurses remained constant.⁵⁵ By 1978, the expectations of female nurses seemed to have changed little since the 1960s:

Today's nurse ... must be self sacrificing, long suffering, warm, compassionate and understanding of her patients' needs, prepared to give up weekends, work nights ... she is expected

⁵² D. Bughwan, "Discrimination Against and Exploitation of Women in the Workplace" (Paper presented at the Women's Legal Status Committee Conference, Johannesburg, 1980), p. 12.

⁵³ Jenny Marot, Interview, 26 October 1993.

⁵⁴ *Manpower Survey* No. 10, 1973, p. 2 and No. 15, 1983, p. 7. The number of white male teachers increased from 14,500 to 20,300, an increase of forty per cent.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

to seek her rewards in job satisfaction. Never job remuneration.⁵⁶

Once again, poor pay was no reason to dismiss nursing as "for a married woman ... money isn't that important".⁵⁷

Another feature article in 1976 pointed out how glamorous secretarial work was, and interviewed five secretaries who were all truly happy and satisfied in their jobs.⁵⁸ A few months later "Job Strategies '76" dealt with advertising, modelling, secretarial work, air hostessing, journalism and public relations.⁵⁹ The following year women were advised to "analyse what you'd like to be and to have in five years time and get cracking. But make sure you've got something like shorthand typing to fall back on."⁶⁰

Perceptions that women worked until they found husbands, and that going to work provided additional scope for meeting large numbers of eligible men, survived during the 1970s. The end of the decade saw air hostessing portrayed as a good job for women for precisely the same reasons it had been considered good more than a decade before. "In the air a hostess comes into contact with the famous, the rich and the eligible".⁶¹

⁵⁶ *Fair Lady* 10 May 1978, p. 44.

⁵⁷ *Darling* 11 June 1980, p. 70.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 9 June 1976, pp. 28-31.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 27 October 1976, pp. 56 ff.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 6 July 1977, p. 52.

⁶¹ *Fair Lady* 28 February 1979, p. 41.

Popular magazines reiterated and reinforced the ideology of domesticity through their emphasis on husbands, marriage and children. *Charmaine*, a magazine seemingly directed at teenagers, produced endless amounts of sub-Mills and Boon romances. In these photo stories, young girls found themselves in all sorts of trouble, with their parents, with their friends. Without exception they all solved their problems by meeting a dream man whom they promptly married.⁶²

In the magazines, most of the work designated as appropriate to women reaffirmed the home and hearth as central to 'real' women's lives. As in the '60s, care was taken to assure readers that professional women retained something of their femininity, despite their careers: "this successful woman still manages to remain essentially feminine."⁶³ For most of these successful women it was thus considered necessary to emphasise their vulnerability. All the qualities assumed necessary for business success, such as assertiveness, confidence and autonomy were defined as masculine: any woman displaying these qualities clearly did so at the expense of her femininity and mental health. As Wessels explained, given that "[a]ffiliative needs are always dominant in women, it follows that strong achievement needs towards goals other than marriage and family will be interpreted as motives rooted in the failure to meet this central affiliative requirement."⁶⁴

⁶² See any edition of *Charmaine* between October 1972 and October 1982.

⁶³ *Darling* 4 March 1981, p. 71.

⁶⁴ D. Wessels, "Achievement Motivation and Occupational Aspirations of Women" (Paper presented at the International Convention of Women, Grahamstown, 1975), p. 6.

Fair Lady, like *Darling*, convinced that femininity was biologically-based and timeless, struggled to find indications of this femininity in the women it interviewed. It succeeded, as did *Darling*, by effectively de-emphasising business women's success in the broader world, while stressing that these women were still vulnerable, or unsure of themselves, that they had not lost sight of the really important issues of life such as children, husbands and home. Thus it was that an article about Professor Sandra van der Merwe emphasised how physically small she was with her "little girl hands with their chewed to the quick nails".⁶⁵ Of Fleur de Villiers, an investigative reporter, it was made clear that "the anticipated flash of arrogance is missing".⁶⁶ Of Dr Pam Sharratt, like many others, it was necessary to assert that "Pamela is an excellent housekeeper".⁶⁷

Other articles, mindful of the magazines' diverse constituencies, and unwilling to alienate potential buyers, continued to warn that careers were often second best substitutes for marriage. It was duly emphasised that many of these women would gladly give up their careers in favour of marriage and a family. One individual, who "pulls in more cash than most women see in a lifetime", explained that she "would give up everything just for that [marriage]".⁶⁸ Thus, throughout the 1970s, journalists took care to emphasise that the working women they interviewed were neither "hard" nor "unfeminine", that their mental health, therefore, was sound.

⁶⁵ *Fair Lady*, 13 February 1980, p. 4.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 May 1974, p. 67.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 15 May 1974, p. 116.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 September 1973, p. 115.

Research focusing on professional women in Cape Town in 1978 suggests that the stereotype of career women as masculine, hard and aggressive was extremely widespread. Professional women themselves perceived other working women to be more 'masculine', while at the same time considering themselves as relatively more 'feminine',⁶⁹ suggesting that in fact career women were perceived to be different from non-career women. Another research project indicated that because "persons in careers are seen as masculine ... there is an indication that a career woman is perceived as less desirable and less healthy than a career man."⁷⁰

Yet, while working women's mental health was questioned by many, signs of change were evident. Although almost every article about professional women emphasised that they retained their femininity, the need to stress this diminished over the 1970s. While some women were still described as "shellacked and glinting",⁷¹ more and more interviews with successful working women were peppered with comments observing that these women were neither "hard", nor "unfeminine", nor "unnatural". Of a product manager it was said:

Heather isn't your stereotyped hard, tough, sharp faced career lady ... it gives her the horrors to think she might ever project that image Far from being the snarling executive type, Heather is slim, pretty, with a quiet voice.⁷²

⁶⁹ J. Bance, "Sex Role Stereotyping in Professional Occupations" (Hons Project, University of Cape Town, 1978), p. 66.

⁷⁰ L. van Reenen, "Women's Attitudes to Career People: a Function of Social Role" (Hons Project, University of Cape Town, 1980), p. 18.

⁷¹ *Darling* 23 June 1976, p. 71.

⁷² *Darling* 30 September 1980, p. 31.

Another magazine pointed out that Val Mickleburgh was "[f]ar removed from the popularised concept of the bitchy, aggressive career woman ... visiting the only woman who has reached the top in the male dominated world of oil is as cosy as morning tea in the suburbs."⁷³

As more and more women entered the workforce, and as more and more women could clearly be described as career women, the stereotype began to collapse under its own weight. And coinciding with its decay was an increase in the number of articles actively portraying assertiveness (as opposed to aggression) as a healthy characteristic for women both in the home and in the work place. While women were still warned of "the risks of being too clever, too conscientious, and too ambitious" in the work place,⁷⁴ the later 1970s and early 1980s carried numerous articles advocating that women *needed* to become more assertive. *Darling* carried an article on how to be more assertive at work as early as 1976 and ran a self-help guide on how to "assert yourself with your man, your mother, anybody" in 1980.⁷⁵

As the idea of assertive women became increasingly acceptable and desirable, so too did the idea of ambitious women. From as early as 1974, *Darling* had suggested using secretarial work, for example, as a stepping stone to something

⁷³ *Fair Lady* 27 August 1980, p. 146.

⁷⁴ *Darling* 27 October 1982, p. 33.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1 October 1980, p. 4. See also *Ibid.*, 7 January 1981, p. 50; 5 August 1981, pp. 35 ff.; 28 April 1982, pp. 84-86; 1 September 1982, pp. 84-85; 13 October 1982, pp. 92 ff.; 30 March 1983, pp. 42 ff.; 22 June 1983, pp. 72 ff.

higher. Good secretarial training could be followed by business courses such as a B.Comm. or an M.B.A. that could open doors to the executive suite.⁷⁶ *Fair Lady* pointed out that "a woman's place in the working world isn't at the bottom of the ladder next to the kettle",⁷⁷ and both magazines provided advice and guidance about how to turn a job into a career. In the mid-1970s the emphasis was on how to get a job, which jobs to choose, the correct way to write letters of application and CVs, or interview techniques.⁷⁸ This kind of information was still presented during the early 1980s but there was an increasing emphasis on how to get promotion and advance up the work hierarchy, how to be a professional.⁷⁹ An article about nursing indicated the shifting thinking: "Today's nurse is a different breed ... highly trained, competent, professional".⁸⁰ Such wording indicated that at least some of the women in these occupations had begun to think of themselves as career women as the negative connotations attached to the term began to disintegrate.

Increasing numbers of women working, whether at the bottom of the ladder or further up, meant that increasing numbers of women had direct access to financial resources. While magazines such as *Charmaine* saw something very

⁷⁶ *Darling* 6 November 1974, pp. 38-41.

⁷⁷ *Fair Lady* 5 December 1979, p. 118.

⁷⁸ See, for example, *Darling* 9 July 1980, pp. 84-85; 29 October 1980, pp. 8-10; 5 August 1981, pp. 35-37, 39.

⁷⁹ See for example *Darling* 28 April 1982, pp. 84-86; 30 March 1983, pp. 42-44; 11 May 1983, pp. 47 ff; 21 December 1983, pp. 72-74; Also *Fair Lady* 5 December 1979, p. 118; 19 May 1982, p. 63; 9 March 1983, p. 103; 27 June 1984, p. 58.

⁸⁰ *Fair Lady* 10 May 1978, p. 44.

vulgar in women earning, spending and controlling their own money,⁸¹ others celebrated financially-independent women. For example, a *Fair Lady* careers focus in 1976 examined women in advertising. Of seven women interviewed, four earned over R12,000 a year, enormous sums; another earned "enough to give my husband's accountant headaches".⁸² For *Fair Lady*, financial independence and ambition had become commendable qualities in women.

While unmarried women clearly controlled their own income and expenditure patterns, increased earnings for married women gave them more influence over the allocation of household earnings.⁸³ Yet even if married women earned, their money tended to be seen as extra to the main income. British research similarly indicates that gender-related financial divisions remained intact. Husbands' money went on basics, wives' money was for luxuries and extras.⁸⁴ Given the insecurity of the South African female labour market - for important constituencies such as teachers - combined with the fact that women typically earned far less than men, it probably made economic sense to see wives' earnings as a windfall. Effectively, wives who worked modified their dependence on husbands rather than eradicating it.

⁸¹ *Charmaine* 8 November 1974, p. 67; 22 November 1974, p. 66.

⁸² *Fair Lady* 21 July 1976, p. 168.

⁸³ However, even by the very end of the 1970s, although some women were able to influence domestic expenditure, many others did not even know what their husbands were earning. Of Cock's survey, fully thirty five per cent did not know their husbands' income (Cock, *Maids and Madams*, p. 155).

⁸⁴ P. Hunt, *Gender and Class Consciousness* (Hong Kong: Macmillan Press, 1980), pp. 119 and 150.

If economic independence remained only a possibility for the future, women with a little money remained part of the present. The growth of financial advice available to women bore eloquent testimony to this fact. 1975 saw advice on "how to make your money grow" expand to include banks, building societies, post office savings, shares and growth funds.⁸⁵ In 1978 *Darling* introduced a regular "Rands and Sense" column dealing with matters such as budgeting and saving.⁸⁶ The following year *Fair Lady* introduced a regular feature with the same name, extending the focus to deal with issues such as retirement annuities, buying a house, and ways of investing money.⁸⁷

As more and more white women earned an income, so financial institutions adapted to embrace the new phenomenon. Old Mutual introduced the first assurance policy specifically for women, either married or single, in 1977.⁸⁸ During the 1970s, advertisements placed by banks showed an evolving awareness of the changing financial status of women. The thralldom in which married women were held in the early years of the decade was made explicit in the following advertisement:

Imagine your husband came to you this Christmas and said: 'Darling, for your Christmas present I've decided to hand all your financial affairs over to you. You won't ever have to ask me for an allowance ever again. You'll have your own little charge card on which you buy everything for yourself and the house. Clothes. The chemist. Eating out. Petrol. The bottle store. Everything. Now listen carefully. Along with your WesBank, you're getting a credit limit. Say it's R200. That

⁸⁵ *Darling* 3 September 1975, pp. 50-51.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 13 September 1978, pp. 66-77.

⁸⁷ *Fair Lady* 1979.

⁸⁸ *Argus* Clippings, 9 September 1977.

means you can spend up to R200 At the end of the month, you'll get one single WesBank account. On it your purchases will be itemised, so you'll have a perfect record of all your spending. It'll help you balance your budget - and perhaps even help you work out ways of saving money. At the end of the month, you'll simply give the account to me and I'll pay it for you.'⁸⁹

The patronising wording - "little charge card"; "Now listen carefully" - implies that Wesbank did not think very highly of women's ability to control their own spending, even though their husbands controlled the credit limits and ultimately paid the accounts at the end of the month.

While the wording differs, the condescending assumptions are very similar in an advertisement for the same bank's services the following year:

Wesbank is confident of the ability of women to spend wisely and for this reason does not use different standards when assessing the credit worthiness of a woman ... we believe that a woman is the backbone of the family because of her stability and responsibility - from this stems the desire to honour obligations and commitments.⁹⁰

WesBank's views regarding women's roles are crystal clear from these two extracts. Men (specifically husbands) controlled access to money; women (wives and mothers) used it to maintain the home.

Yet just one year later, in 1974, another bank revealed that it recognised that increasing numbers of women were working and earning. Its terminology, cashing in on that of the feminist movement, represented an attempt to convince

⁸⁹ *Fair Lady* 29 November 1972, p. 21.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 28 November 1973, p. 35.

women that, in financial affairs at least, banks could be more understanding than husbands. As patronising, too:

Sign a Nedcheque, baby. It's your declaration of independence. Nedcheque means a new freedom. Once you've opened your current account at Nedbank you'll quickly see why. You don't have to ask ... for money. There's no passbook to present. Your favourite shops are happy to have your Nedcheque. And, suddenly you're free from carrying large sums of cash ... Nedcheque. Simple to use, easy to obtain. Just see your Nedbank manager. A man who might just know what liberation is all about.⁹¹

Standard Bank also recognised that financially independent women comprised a section of their market large enough to warrant advertising campaigns:

So come in. Have a chat with your Standard Bank manager. He'll be happy to explain to you how our flexible fixed deposits will flex your money's earning power.⁹²

Yet while both Nedbank and Standard Bank clearly recognised that women represented a new and growing market for financial services, both still assumed that all bank managers were male. The sex-based hierarchies, and the sexual division of labour within the banking system, were clarified by another of Nedbank's advertisements:

Miss, Mrs or Ms: There isn't a woman who doesn't need the power of the Nedrand Money must be made to work ... and work hard. Everyone, from top management to our girls at the counters, works at applying this principle.⁹³

While it was both profitable and realistic to accept that financially independent women could take control of their own finances, it seems clear that neither

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 20 February 1974, p. 63.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 7 November 1979, p. 25.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 28 April 1976, p. 170.

Nedbank nor Standard Bank dreamt of disseminating the subversive notion that women could manage other people's finances during the 1970s.

Changing patterns of income earning and spending also impacted on those women who did not work. Married women who did not earn an income were advised to spend their allowances carefully in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Saving money was the main emphasis for those who did not earn it. But by the mid to late 1970s, in the context of economic recession, this too had changed and women who did not work were given far-ranging advice about how to *make* money from home.⁹⁴

A major element of this kind of advice consisted of interviews with and articles about women who were earning money from home. At first these articles continued the ideas of the earlier period. Recognising that mothers (never fathers) often found it difficult to combine paid work with their domestic duties, the magazines suggested ways in which home-based mothers could make pin money, by using hobbies to generate a little extra cash that could supplement the housekeeping money.⁹⁵ Women who stayed at home could do typing, book-keeping, translating, selling, baby sitting, baking, dressmaking, craftwork or they could start a creche. "If you're good at it make pin money."⁹⁶ A woman who had worked full-time before having her first baby in 1972 was fortunate

⁹⁴ See, for example, *Darling* 31 July 1974, pp. 74-75; *Fair Lady* 10 August 1983, pp. 72 ff.

⁹⁵ *Darling* 17 October 1973, p. 55. Also, all the married women employed outside the home in Cock's study, spent their earnings largely on the household (*Maids and Madams*, p. 156).

⁹⁶ *Darling* "Housewives's Guide" 14 August 1974, pp. 77 and 79.

enough to be able to carry on working at home for small sums of money after the birth of her child:

But it was very much freelance, and you don't get much money for book reviews ... and then I started doing a bit of newspaper freelancing and then I did a whole lot of freelance research writing for Readers Digest It is really very hard to work when kids are little, and I'm glad I didn't have to leave the home.⁹⁷

In 1979, *Fair Lady* pointed out that married women needed an outside interest, that this was healthy, good for the children and good for one's marriage. Women could either join an art class or start up a home business; eight examples were used to prove that working from home could be done. The examples discussed ranged from fashion design to farm stalls, from boutiques to guitar teaching, from catering to protea farming.⁹⁸ *Darling* also focused on the earning capacity of home-based married women in an article in 1983. As in the earlier period, it was clear that a woman should not do this on her own. A wife who knitted was "well aware of the pitfalls of being a young and inexperienced entrepreneur, but with ... the expert guidance of husband Louis, Elaine feels she is doing the right thing."⁹⁹ Two more wives, who had gone into partnership and established a personnel placement agency, had "the security of knowing our husbands are there to advise and guide us."¹⁰⁰ *Femina* strongly supported the idea of running a "nice little backyard business and keeping an eye on the kids

⁹⁷ Lyn Bryer, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 15 June 1993.

⁹⁸ *Fair Lady* 31 January 1979, pp. 37 ff.

⁹⁹ *Darling* 23 November 1983, p. 52.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

at the same time", because it enabled women to stay at home with the children.¹⁰¹

The shift of focus from part-time and temporary work for married women with domestic responsibilities, to starting up small domestic industries under the benevolent supervision of their husbands, needs to be seen in the context of the changing economic climate. The boom period from 1960 to 1973 was one of large numbers of job vacancies and personnel shortages. *If* women wanted to work outside the home, they could usually do so. From the early 1970s, the declining growth rate of the South African economy meant that jobs were beginning to be harder to find, particularly in less skilled or unskilled work, where black men were proving to be cheaper than white women.¹⁰² Reform initiatives saw certain black employees encouraged to train for skilled positions,¹⁰³ and even where there were vacancies there was no guarantee that white women would be employed.

The social implications attaching to their employment on the same site as non-white men will remain the most important barrier to the recruitment of large numbers of white female production workers in the major industry groups The consensus of opinion [among employers] was that, even though

¹⁰¹ *Femina* August 1983, p. 18.

¹⁰² The percentage of black workers employed in semi-skilled clerical positions grew from twenty seven to thirty nine per cent between 1970 and 1980. The same years saw the percentage employed as sales workers grow from forty four to fifty five per cent (*South Africa: an Appraisal*, pp. 38-39).

¹⁰³ The percentage of black workers in highly skilled positions increased from thirty two per cent to forty per cent and the percentage in skilled positions from five to eight per cent between 1970 and 1980 (*South Africa: an Appraisal*, pp. 38-39).

white women may be suitable for most trades, non-white males would be preferred by the industries surveyed.¹⁰⁴

But a large number of white women were not looking for full-time, long-term employment. Those who were, generally aged thirty five or older, often no longer had the skills or the confidence necessary, and required retraining before they were employable. When Anglo-American offered "its business machines and office space to women who wanted to regain their secretarial and clerical skills", it was inundated with applications from "women from 30 to 60 years [who] grasped the opportunity to revitalise their skills." So great was the response that Anglo American "believed that the shortage of skilled labour wasn't real. People weren't looking at the available resources and women weren't given the opportunity to return to work."¹⁰⁵

When Barclays Bank decided to extend and expand its practice of employing white women on a part-time or temporary basis, it was flooded with responses - literally thousands of women responded. The vast majority of these part-time work-seekers were women aged twenty eight to thirty five years with children. It was only those aged forty or older who were looking for permanent employment.¹⁰⁶

Elements within the state also believed that the skills shortage could be resolved if sufficient white women could be enticed into entering the work place. In the

¹⁰⁴ D. Wessels, *Manpower Requirements and the Utilisation of White Women: The Views of 50 Employers in 9 Major Industry Groups* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council (hereafter HSRC), 1975), pp. 84-87.

¹⁰⁵ *Manpower 2000 Bulletin* February 1981, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, August 1981, p. 1.

interests of big business, state funded researchers focused on establishing the reasons why white women were not entering the labour force in sufficient numbers, only to discover that most women wanted part-time work.¹⁰⁷ A survey in the Witwatersrand area revealed that most white graduate women preferred not to work full-time.

Notwithstanding the importance of self-realisation ... the career minded mother still prefers to be at home with her children in the afternoon. The most significant variable in the graduates' decision to work part-time is the presence of children.¹⁰⁸

In 1981, the same researcher observed that

[n]ot all graduates want a career outside the home The majority (76%) ... are not prepared to accept the challenge of the strain of full career involvement concurrently with family building. They prefer to work during some period of their later life or choose low career commitment in the form of a continuous part-time career. It is quite clear that women graduates generally expect to stay home for some period after having children and choose the 'wife-mother' role until their children have matured before seeking fulfilment through occupational activities.¹⁰⁹

Yet, contrasting with the earlier period,

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, D. Wessels, *The Employment Potential of Graduate Housewives in the PWV Region Part 1: Part Time Employment* (Pretoria: Institute for Manpower Research, HSRC, 1972), pp. 52-59.

¹⁰⁸ D. Wessels, *The Employment Potential of Graduate Housewives in the PWV Region Part 2: The Careers of Graduate Housewives* (Pretoria: Institute for Manpower Research, HSRC, 1974), p. 130.

¹⁰⁹ D. Wessels, *Career Orientation and Work Commitment of University Educated Women* (Pretoria: Institute of Manpower Research, HSRC, 1981), p. 7. The survey deals with career orientation and work commitment of 6,132 university-educated white women.

[m]arital status is an insignificant variable in the work involvement preferences of graduate women. Child rearing is closely related to work commitment and is a significant variable in the decision to take up employment. Mothers generally demonstrate a low desire to work full-time.¹¹⁰

Of the few mothers who did work full-time, almost half were sole breadwinners or "important family income co-earners".¹¹¹ Clearly, the vast majority of white mothers who wanted to work wanted part-time positions, rather than full-time careers.¹¹²

Women's preference for part-time work was considered admirable by the many male authorities. Despite the shortage of skilled labour, the President of the Institute of Manpower Research reflected that "[o]ne wonders if the time is not ripe to consider a statutory limitation of working hours for all mothers with preschool and schoolgoing children to a maximum of five hours a day."¹¹³

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹¹¹ Wessels, *Employment Potential ... Part 2*, p. 130.

¹¹² See also Cock, *Maids and Madams*, p. 129. Sixty two per cent of the women interviewed would have liked part-time work, and only twelve per cent wanted full-time work. The remainder preferred to be full-time housewives. Also, A. van Wyngaard suggests that by 1982 most people expected women, married or single, to join the labour force, but that this was not the case for women with children: "people are still not comfortable with the concept of the working mother." (A. van Wyngaard, "Attitudes of White South African Students Towards the Married Working Woman", *South African Journal of Sociology* Vol. 21, No. 3, 1990, p. 155.)

¹¹³ President of the Institute of Manpower Research, cited in Wessels, *Employment Potential ... Part 1*, preface.

Others did not require statutory limitations to impose their preferences. The recruitment officer of one company, having decided that he disapproved of mothers working, simply filtered them out of the recruitment process.

When I interview young white women I ask them about how many children they have, their ages and who looks after them. I don't believe in maids There should be continuous care by the mother for the first years. Once the kids are at school it's OK.¹¹⁴

While full-time work may or may not have been available, depending on the sector and geographical location, on the personal biases of hiring departments, part-time work was in very short supply. A number of South African studies pointed to the excess of women's demand relative to employers' supply of such jobs. All of these studies recommended the creation of more part-time jobs.¹¹⁵

While suitable part-time jobs may have been difficult to find, the desire or need to earn an income remained. Starting up a small business from home was attractive for precisely the same reasons that part-time work had been desirable, with the added advantage that even women with extremely young children or babies could participate. Even pregnancy did not prevent wives from contributing to domestic finances through home-based work.

When I was doing the jams [for the farm stall], my children were small, and they were born, I think one was born in the

¹¹⁴ Cock et al, "Child Care", p. 15.

¹¹⁵ See, for example, S. van der Walt, *An Investigation Into The Utilisation of White Women Labour in The South African Industry* (Personnel Research Division, University of The Orange Free State, November 1976), pp. 5, 30, 34 and Study Group on Women in Employment, *Memorandum on Women in Employment* (Submitted to the Commission of Inquiry into Labour Legislation, Hillbrow, February 1978), p. 9.

year we started this, and I was with my big fat stomach peeling the vegetables! And then I cooked the jam in the kitchen and the children were round about, all around my feet.¹¹⁶

Women who worked for money, whether at home or elsewhere, simply *added* their work commitments to their domestic duties, rather than reassessing the obligations inherent in being a wife and mother. Researchers in the United States noted that even full-time professional employment had little impact on women's and men's perceptions of appropriate roles. In the United States, wives with careers "seem to be currently undergoing a role expansion process which allows them to expand their horizons in an internal and psychological manner without abandoning traditional functions and obligations."¹¹⁷

For many women, misrepresentations of biology defining the existing sexual division of labour and the myth of the 'happy housewife' as timeless and unchanging, remained the predominant and deciding factor in both men's and women's conceptualisations of women's purpose.¹¹⁸ As Wessels observed:

Woman, as distinct from man, primarily has an anatomical function - that of bearing children, and a concomitant social role - that of caring for and nurturing these children Research evidence suggests that the over-riding majority of women today still seem to find adequate self-fulfilment in their role as wife and mother All women are aware that marriage and child rearing are defined as woman's true vocation.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Judy Badenhurst, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 16 February 1993.

¹¹⁷ S. Yogev, "Do Professional Women have Egalitarian Marital Relationships?", *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 43, 1981, p. 870.

¹¹⁸ A. Oakley, *Housewife*, p. 160.

¹¹⁹ Wessels, *Employment Potential ... Part 2*, pp. 53-54.

And where household maintenance was shared, it tended to be with a domestic servant rather than a husband. The issue was one of working mothers, never working fathers or working parents.¹²⁰ Paid work was never represented as problematic for fathers; instead it was expected that fathers and husbands should abrogate responsibility for housework and children. Fathers without wives who employed housekeepers or nannies were making the best of a bad job; widows or female divorcees doing the same were a social problem. Whether a wife was alive or dead, employed or a 'housewife', the home was a place for a man to relax. As Singer observed, "dual career wives differ from traditional wives, dual career husbands do not necessarily differ from traditional husbands".¹²¹

While it is clear from shifting work patterns, from banking advertisements and the media itself that a degree of transformation was taking place, much remained unchanged. For many, as during the 1960s, the solution to all women's problems lay in finding a husband and having a family.¹²² The

¹²⁰ Cock, *Maids and Madams*, pp. 146-7. Research in Britain indicates that the emergence of the dual earner family has had little impact on men's lives (J. Brannen and P. Moss, "British Households after Maternity Leave" in S. Lewis, D. Israeli and H. Hootsman, *Dual Earner families: International Perspectives* (London: Sage Publications, 1992), p. 124).

¹²¹ V. Singer, "Family Functioning, Sex Role Ideology, Psychological Androgyny and Self Actualisation in Dual-Career and Traditional Families" (MA, University of Cape Town, 1984), p. 131.

¹²² Every edition of *Charmaine* between 1972 and 1982 has stories idealising marriage. One example is a serialised photo story in *Charmaine*, September and October 1976, in which a widowed and lonely mother finds the possibility of love and happiness with a male friend. She cannot marry the man because her seventeen year old daughter would feel neglected. It all ends happily for both with a double wedding once the daughter finds a nice boyfriend.

perception that a woman's only hope for happiness was marriage and children, that her place was in the home, breeding and supporting the family, while her husband worked away from home generating an income, survived the 1960s and remained pervasive in the media, particularly in the earlier years of the 1970s.

That the family, whatever its size, and whatever else women should decide to do, must remain central was made abundantly clear in a presidential address to the Business and Professional Women's Club:

The young women of today have a duty to themselves and to posterity to come forward and join the Federation ... and drive it on to greater achievements for the fullness of life, not only for women, but for men and the family.¹²³

Women's obligations to society, to their husbands and to their children were thus stated over and over again. If a married women worked, her "career is considered less important [than her husband's] - if the husband's career requires that they move, they move. If the babysitter fails to turn up the wife cancels her appointment, if pressure occurs as a result of both spouses working, the wife resigns."¹²⁴ For women, "[a]ssuming an outside occupational role does not bring significant changes in the demands made by home and family roles, which remain the primary responsibility of the wife."¹²⁵

¹²³ *Cape News* August 1975.

¹²⁴ Singer, "Family Functioning", p. 39.

¹²⁵ J. van Rooyen, *Female Career Commitment : A Life Span Perspective* (Johannesburg: National Institute for Personnel Research, 1981), p. 6.

That the magazines and their readers largely adhered to this view is apparent. In a discussion about married women teachers, a *Fair Lady* subscriber asked "how can a teacher and a mother be expected to devote 3 - 5 hours a day to marking books, tests etc,... and be 100% effective in her role as wife and mother?"¹²⁶ It was also explained that women's obligations in the home were part and parcel of their duties to their husbands. The onus was on women to support their husbands in their chosen career.¹²⁷ That wives' contributions were considered critical to their husbands' successes was made explicit by an article entitled "Businessman's Wife - Support or Sabotage" that posed the following question:

To what extent, if any, does a man's wife influence the success or otherwise of his business career? Mrs A says if a wife can provide an orderly well-kept home where her husband can retreat from the pressures of the outside world - where he can recharge his batteries ... she has already put him on the first rung of the ladder to success. Mrs C says in essence, a wife will be a pillar of support to her husband's career aspirations.¹²⁸

In Cape Town, a charm school was endeavouring to capture new students by advertising its capacity to teach the skills that were deemed necessary for businessmen's wives. According to the principal, the subjects considered essential were the following:

¹²⁶ *Fair Lady* 3 October 1973, p. 19.

¹²⁷ In the United States, opinion polls revealed that as late as 1980, seventy seven per cent of women and sixty eight per cent of men believed that if both husband and wife had 'interesting and good jobs' and he was offered promotion in another city, the wife should quit her job and go with him. If she was offered the job, sixty eight per cent of women and sixty two per cent of men said she should not accept it (R. Simon and J. Landis, "The Polls-A Report", *Public Opinion Quarterly* Vol. 53, No. 2, 1989, p. 272).

¹²⁸ *Commerce* August 1975, pp. 10-11.

Etiquette, hostessing, public speaking, knowledge of wines, ball room dancing, make up, skin care, hair analysis, mothercraft, family planning and budgeting.¹²⁹

In the early 1980s it was still considered by many to be a wife's role to act as a pillar of support for her husband. In 1981 a bank was paying R350 per head in order to send executives' wives on two-week courses on how to become "the perfect companion to the management function".¹³⁰ Hope was not lost for those unfortunate enough to be excluded from this opportunity, as the following year saw a company established that provided the same sort of information in a more accessible manner. It is perhaps ironic that it was a group of four businessmen's wives who established a company teaching wives how to provide such support, but perhaps they were best in a position to know what was needed:

Four enterprising women who firmly believe that a wife *can* play an active role in supporting her husband in his professional life have formed a company ... offering conferences designed to enlighten women in this position He automatically grows in his working environment and is subjected to various academic and social stimuli from meetings, seminars, lunches etc. The wife doesn't have these opportunities and she *can* be left behind Most businessmen in top positions agree that it takes more than merely looking the part to function successfully as the wife of an executive Contemporary Woman Seminars was formed ... to help the wife of the '80s expand and enrich her role as mother, companion, hostess and friend.¹³¹

The 1960s debates revolved around whether or not married women should work, in a context where married women were perceived, virtually by

¹²⁹ *Herald* 24 November 1979.

¹³⁰ *Argus* Clippings, 24 August 1981.

¹³¹ *Darling* 31 March 1982, pp. 108-112.

definition, to be mothers as well. By the mid-1970s the idea of married women as mothers had begun to disintegrate a little as more women postponed childbirth while at the same time having fewer children.¹³² While it was increasingly acceptable for married women to work, it still remained controversial for *mothers* to work,¹³³ and many did not want to work while their children were small: "I said I would never work while my kids were little. I started working when they were in standard three, standard four, but then they were in school all the time." ¹³⁴

As was the case during the 1960s and early 1970s, professionals were employed to convince women that their duty as mothers lay at home with their children. An article entitled "Money can't buy you love" asked "Do working women make good mothers?"¹³⁵ The answer was a definite no. One working mother told how she put her child into a creche, but that "it was just when he needed

¹³² Forty four per cent of white births were to women aged twenty four years or younger in 1965. Of white births, 38.1 per cent were to the same age group in 1975 (Department of Statistics, *Report on Births, 1965* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1973), p. 33; *Report on Births, 1975*, p. 33). Furthermore, the total population of white women in 1965 of 1,607,000 produced 76,300 children. The population of white women increased by nearly twenty five percent to 2,118,000 by 1975, with the number of babies being born increasing to 80,026, an increase of only 3.5 per cent (*Report on Births 1965*, p. 2, and *Report on Births, 1975*, p. 2).

¹³³ Wessels' work indicated that "[m]arital status is an insignificant variable in the work involvement preferences of graduate women. Child rearing is closely related to work commitment and is a significant variable in the decision to take up employment. Mothers generally demonstrate a low desire to work full time" (Wessels, *Career Orientation*, conclusion).

¹³⁴ Reinette Camphor, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 4 February 1993.

¹³⁵ *Darling* 5 March 1980, p. 2.

the warmth and security of a home and he never got over it". Reinforcing her point, a male official from the Child Welfare Bureau pointed out that:

[t]he first two years of a child's life are critical for the building up of emotional ties, especially between mother and child If the mother goes out to work, this can have a very serious effect. Because of the lack of emotional bonding, the child may find it difficult to form strong attachments in later life.¹³⁶

As a teacher observed,

I can usually tell which children have working mothers. They lack attention and are very demanding of the teacher's time ... some of them may tend towards delinquency because they have lots of spare time to kill in the afternoons I would never work if I had a child.¹³⁷

As more women moved into the work place, so calls for them to return to the home became more strident. What can, with the benefit of hindsight, be seen as a desperate rearguard action, seemed at the time to be a fight over the continued existence of a 'civilised' society. Yet while the Child Welfare officer cited above argued that mothers should remain with their children, he also implied that after the age of two a child could be safely left with a creche. The 1960s saw troops of male professionals mobilise with the forces of the church and the state, jointly campaigning for women to remain at home. In contrast, the middle to late 1970s saw very little emanating from these sources. Instead, the view that delinquent and problem children were the consequence of working mothers become increasingly contested by individual women defending their respective positions. Letters to *Fair Lady* indicate the desperation with which

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

individual women fought for a return to an earlier utopia in which all mothers stayed at home, while others struggled to justify their decisions to work.¹³⁸

Views concerning unmarried women also showed signs of change. During the 1960s, unmarried women were considered to be in an 'unnatural' state of revolt against their own biology. By the mid-1970s, perceptions had shifted:

'unnatural' women had become 'unlucky'. *Fair Lady* pointed out that society was organised for the benefit of the couple, and that single women were victims of such organisation:

Whether divorced, widowed or simply unmarried, the single woman suffers from considerable disadvantages. She exists on the margin of South African society. Only the young and eligible are able to lead a social life which is satisfying. The older single woman has no place amongst the mostly-married and often-indifferent folk around her. Convention and custom are organised to benefit the couple.¹³⁹

By the mid-1970s the term 'spinster' had virtually disappeared from the vocabulary of the media. In 1977, *Darling* commented on the large number of "poor, lonely, unhappy women everywhere",¹⁴⁰ and followed up a year later with an article entitled "alone in a world of couples".¹⁴¹ Advice about how to

¹³⁸ See the letters pages of *Fair Lady* 10 June 1970; 8 July 1970; 14 October 1970; 26 May 1971; 13 October 1971; 3 May 1972; 24 July 1974 and 12 October 1977 for letters supporting women working. For letters opposed to women working or advocating that women stay at home, see the letters pages of *Fair Lady* 29 April 1970; 16 September 1970; 3 October 1973; 28 November 1973; 15 May 1974; 28 May 1975; 27 September 1978 and 27 August 1980.

¹³⁹ *Fair Lady* 12 December 1973, p. 7.

¹⁴⁰ *Darling* 27 April 1977, p. 20.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 27 September 1978, pp. 32 ff.

terminate the single state was available in almost every magazine during the 1960s and early 1970s, but was conspicuous by its absence during the later 1970s and early 1980s. Instructions detailing how to get married began to be replaced by advice concerning how best to cope if one was single. A telling indication of change was signified by an article published by *Femina* in 1982. Observing the changes in the wider society, *Femina* observed that: "we *used* to be slightly sorry for single people All they really wanted was a husband or wife to cosset and care for". For *Femina*, by the early 1980s, being single often meant happier, healthier and more fulfilled lives.¹⁴²

Although being unmarried drew less censure from society, and could even, as *Femina* indicated, bring a few benefits, marriage still remained desirable for the status it brought women. Widowhood or divorce were preferable to never having married as they conferred a certain degree of social status, simply by virtue of having been married to a man at some point. As was observed by a female doctor, "I find it sad that for many women in this country marriage seems the only passport to status."¹⁴³ That status was something one acquired through men was made clear in a later edition of *Fair Lady*:

In my presence one married woman vehemently objected to being called Ms lest anyone should think she was only Miss. On asking why ... I was told ... the trouble was that single women have no status.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² *Femina* November 1982, p. 26 (emphasis added).

¹⁴³ *Fair Lady* 26 June 1974, p. 26.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 8 May 1975, p. 23.

In white South African society, where social rank rested on economic ability or earning power, status was clearly vested in men.¹⁴⁵ Although women were beginning to break into traditionally higher paid fields, they took their lower ranking as females with them. If social standing was determined by the kind of job one did, then better-paid ones (ie higher status) were generally only sanctioned for men. And where women entered male fields in large numbers, so the value and prestige attached to those jobs diminished. If women could do it, then it could not represent much of a challenge.

Thus the middle and late 1970s saw change in a variety of ways. While marriage and motherhood remained desirable aspirations, women were marrying later and were having fewer children. More women, in particular more mothers, were working and more women were acquiring influence, if not control, over domestic finances through the medium of their own earnings.

These changing social patterns were caused, according to some, by the adverse influence of feminism. The 1970s saw a tendency to blame the Women's Liberation movement for misleading women. Married mothers who expressed their dissatisfaction with domesticity by entering the workforce, for example, were branded as 'abnormal' and 'unnatural', victims of dangerous feminist ideas. These subversive philosophies allegedly damaged mentally healthy women, transforming them into insubordinate, disobedient 'unwomanly' women:

¹⁴⁵ See Spender for a discussion of how status is measured differently for men and women (D. Spender, *Man Made Language* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 37-39).

It is totally beyond me what women are trying to do ... what kind of children are we bringing up into the world ... where 50 per cent of the women who do work, don't need to work It is pure laziness An outright inability to face life as it is, as it was, and as it always will be The [feminist] indoctrination to which she is subject ... becomes as befuddling and weakening to her state of mind as constant physical blows. The definition of female liberation is women who conveniently pass the buck.¹⁴⁶

Strident voices such as these paid little or no attention to the processes of change taking place around them. Economic and social change that propelled women into the workplace preceded the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and there was no counterpart in South Africa to the feminist mass movements of Britain and the United States. In South Africa, heightened awareness of discrimination in the workplace, the consequence of ever-increasing numbers of women going out to work, was the cause of most of the dissatisfaction expressed by women's organisations. And if, by the mid-1970s, the process was dialectical, many of the South African supporters of the feminist movement firmly believed that women did not want to be liberated from their husbands and children. The removal of legislation discriminating against women would not adversely affect their families: educated women made 'better' mothers, higher wages could translate into fewer hours away from home, and in the event of widowhood or divorce mothers would be better able to support their offspring.

¹⁴⁶ *Fair Lady* 30 August 1978, p. 15.

Chipping at More Barriers: The Women's Movements

Awareness of discrimination against women in the work place had been increasing since the early 1960s. During the sixties, women's organisations such as the Business and Professional Women's Club focused on two major areas of discrimination against women. Firstly, the legal disabilities embodied in the marriage laws were considered unjust; secondly, women had a right to work in fields previously reserved for men. By the mid-1970s, the emphasis had shifted to incorporate two further themes. Firstly, there was a growing focus on discrimination in the work place in terms of women's right not simply to work, but to break through the glass ceiling. The second theme, inextricably linked to the first, was the issue of equal treatment in terms of pay.

During the 1960s, when white men and women had largely been doing different jobs, the issue of equal pay for equal work had failed to gather substantial support. By the mid 1970s, simply because more and more women were working - whether married or single, divorced or widowed, mothers or not - growing numbers were becoming aware that discrimination was affecting their salaries, their opportunities and their promotion prospects. The very fact that women had begun to enter previously male-dominated fields had exposed disparities in pay that culminated in increasing demands for equal treatment. Thus, from the early 1970s, magazine articles featuring interviews with working women frequently raised the issue of discrimination, usually in terms of financial remuneration.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ *Fair Lady* 4 September 1974, pp. 72-75.

Organisations, such as the Business and Professional Women's Club, that had lobbied for women's rights during the 1960s felt, by the beginning of the '70s, that their work had been successful.¹⁴⁸ Women's right to work had been established, and women were both free to work and freer to choose what kind of work they wanted to do. *Fair Lady* commented with a degree of approval that "half the impetus of the fight has been lost simply because so much has come right".¹⁴⁹

Others disagreed, and by the middle of the 1970s further research had revealed that women's choices were still restricted. Academic research undertaken in the manufacturing industries revealed that discrimination was still endemic:

It is evident that manufacturing industry generally offers very limited employment possibilities for white women The rough work on the site and the type of male worker employed there, rule out a woman's employment on plant sites; it is 'no' for women to the post of process engineer in a petrol refinery There is the objection to the shift arrangements It is doubtful whether it would be fair ever to put a woman on night shift.¹⁵⁰

This particular report further observed that the credibility of female technicians was questioned as employers believed that "women will not be able to sell technical advice to farmers" although "they could nonetheless fit into consulting work where pets are concerned".¹⁵¹ Another individual, a mining engineer, was infuriated that as a female she was unable to acquire an underground ticket,

¹⁴⁸ *Career Woman* No. 36, 1973.

¹⁴⁹ *Fair Lady* 5 January 1977, p. 112.

¹⁵⁰ Wessels, *Manpower Requirements*, p. 70.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

without which her prospects for advancement were limited.¹⁵² Strategies that had been successfully used to prevent black labour from climbing work hierarchies were thus redeployed against white women, the same tactics effectively maintaining both white dominance and male dominance.

Even when employers endeavoured to eliminate discriminatory practices in their own companies, and set about employing women, in many cases their clients and customers proved reluctant to accept that women could do the job as well as men. A woman employed as a chartered secretary in Cape Town in 1978 found that men refused to deal with her on the grounds that she was a woman.¹⁵³

Even by the late 1970s, despite the increase in the numbers of working women, a researcher felt able to exclude women from his research on the grounds that:

The social climate is such that gainful, active employment in occupations is somehow thought to be the preserve of men in society The stamp of male dominance in the occupational sphere remains and is testified to by the gender associated with many jobs.¹⁵⁴

Awareness of discriminatory practices was fueled by the media. In 1974 *Fair Lady* conducted its own investigation into equal pay for equal work and discovered that, in the motor industry at least, while pay was equalised across pay grades, women were graded lower than men, even when they did the same

¹⁵² *Career Woman* No. 44, 1977.

¹⁵³ *From Women* No. 13, August 1978.

¹⁵⁴ P. Stopforth and L. Schlemmer, *Prestige and Socio-Economic Rank and Order of Occupations and Occupational Groupings among Whites in South Africa* (Durban: Centre for Applied Social Sciences, University of Natal, 1978), p. 29.

jobs, and women remained in grades longer than men.¹⁵⁵ The following year it was reported that in Cape Town women earned substantially less than men. Forty eight thousand men earned over R3,000 a year while fewer than three thousand women earned that amount.¹⁵⁶ While equal pay was bitterly opposed by some, by the early 1980s it had clearly generated sufficient consensus to permit the government to legislate in favour of it. By 1982 the Industrial council was preparing to press charges against a construction firm for underpaying women.¹⁵⁷

As equal pay emerged as a controversial issue during the 1970s, so too did the opportunities available to women. The Business and Professional Women's Club, realising that perhaps they had been a little hasty in 1973,¹⁵⁸ conducted a survey revealing the following:

In the *Financial Mail's* top 100 companies, women form 38 per cent of the white workforce. Although in some companies there is 55 per cent female employment, only 17 per cent of the supervisors are women and a mere 1.5 per cent managers.

¹⁵⁵ *Fair Lady* 4 September 1974, pp. 72-75. For more detailed accounts of pay and grading disparities see *Memorandum on Women*, pp. 2-12, 30-44. Van Der Walt's *Investigation* provides a survey of the grading of women in sixty four enterprises (pp. 11-13). For details regarding unequal pay and opportunities in the teaching profession see Bughwan, "Discrimination", pp. 11-12.

¹⁵⁶ *Argus* Clippings, 25 July 1975.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 7 September 1982.

¹⁵⁸ In 1973, the Business and Professional Women's Club had announced that the only jobs not open to women were those that would affect their child-bearing capacity (*Career Woman* No. 36, 1973).

60 per cent of the companies never send women on outside training courses or seminars.¹⁵⁹

In 1981 a female personnel consultant observed that:

I often respond to ads in the paper by phoning to ask if we may send a woman along, and they are dumbfounded There are however problems, even if the woman gets the job. The salary structures for men and women are not the same. If a man can expect R1,500 as a monthly salary, a woman is likely to be offered R900 or R1,000.¹⁶⁰

Two years later another personnel consultant, who specialised in top and middle management, commented that while "we probably have contact with about 2,000 people over a year, if one per cent of these are women it's a lot."¹⁶¹

In contrast to the earlier period, then, the 1970s saw the women's media refocus from women's entry into particular fields, to their lack of upward mobility within those fields. Where women had breached the barriers of the sexual division of work in one sense by entering previously male dominated fields, it was simply to face another barrier. Women remained, with some exceptions, confined to the lower levels within those fields.

From the mid-1970s, questions were being asked as to why this was so. Part of the answer seemed to be that bursaries in the scientific and professional fields were generally closed to women.¹⁶² Women were discovering that while industry virtuously asserted that it would employ trained white women, it was

¹⁵⁹ *Cape News* April 1975.

¹⁶⁰ *Argus* Clippings, 17 December 1981.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 24 August 1983.

¹⁶² *Argus* Clippings: *Daily News* 8 September 1975.

extremely reluctant to finance university training for them.¹⁶³ It also seemed that women were not getting the appropriate training in management techniques and skills, in large part because companies simply did not send women for training that taught the skills necessary for such positions.¹⁶⁴

Awareness of the dearth of management training facilities for women prompted one university to announce that it intended to initiate a management development course for both men and women.¹⁶⁵ Women would thus be required to attend extra classes teaching them how to win promotion to executive jobs in a workplace created, defined and controlled by men. Similarly the Cape Technikon organised three workshops for women covering career planning, career changes and career women.¹⁶⁶ Assertiveness training for women, as discussed earlier, formed part of the strategy aimed at opening up middle level and top level jobs for women. By the early 1980s, seminars for assertiveness training for women were beginning to be advertised in the newspapers.¹⁶⁷

Women's organisations tended to retain the focus on legislative discrimination. A small group of Cape Town feminists published a newsletter that focused mainly on how to unite black and white women and how to combat racism and

¹⁶³ Wessels, *Manpower Requirements*, p. 89.

¹⁶⁴ *Cape News* April 1975. See also *Memorandum on Women*, pp. 45-55 and van Der Walt, *Investigation*, p. 27.

¹⁶⁵ *Argus* Clippings, 5 August 1978; *Cape Times* Clippings, 5 August 1978.

¹⁶⁶ *Argus* Clippings, 20 June 1983.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 24 March 1983.

rape, as well as lobbying for a change in the abortion laws.¹⁶⁸ Durban's Woman in Action group compiled a handbook called *Womanpower* that outlined the legal position of both black and white women and called for a commission of enquiry into legislation discriminating against women.¹⁶⁹ That this coincided with UNESCO's Year of the Woman seems to be more than a coincidence.

The Women's Legal Status Committee was also established in 1975 as the result of a summer school for women focusing on laws affecting women. By the end of the course the participants felt so strongly that the problems of widespread and endemic discrimination against women needed addressing that they established the Committee in an effort to find a political voice, in order to correct what they saw as inequities in the legal system.¹⁷⁰ Although few in numbers, during 1977 the Committee effectively lobbied the Commission of Enquiry into Labour Legislation into agreeing to investigate the position of working women in South Africa.¹⁷¹ The Committee's success was evident when the Wiehahn Commission's 1981 report adopted a large number of its recommendations.¹⁷² 1981 also saw the establishment of the Woman's Bureau, aimed at co-ordinating research, establishing data bases and safeguarding

¹⁶⁸ *From Women*, newsletter of the Cape Town Feminists, published 1976-1982.

¹⁶⁹ *Fair Lady* 5 March 1975, pp. 74 ff.

¹⁷⁰ Roberta Johnson, telephonic interview with the author, 8 June 1993.

¹⁷¹ Women's Legal Status Committee, *Newsletter* August 1977.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, September 1981.

women's rights.¹⁷³ And while the Women's Legal Status Committee was lobbying the Wiehahn commission in 1977, another National Convention on the Status of Women, this time in conjunction with the South African Law Commission, met and reiterated the resolutions passed by its 1970 convention, and again called for an end to sexual discrimination.¹⁷⁴

Conclusion

If the 1970s saw the creation of several organisations aiming to protect and enhance women's rights, their formation also reflected the continued suppression of those rights. If these bodies articulated some of the changing demands of women, as increasing numbers entered the labour force, they also frequently fought for the preservation of traditional women's roles, endeavouring to protect and enhance women's status as home-makers and mothers. The durability of traditional gender stereotypes was effectively reinforced over the 1970s and early 1980s as substantial numbers of women took on the dual role of paid worker and unpaid housewife. If a few had climbed to the top of their particular ladders, they headed organisations and institutions that had been born and bred in a miasma of patriarchal values and norms. The passage of time had seen little impact on the 'men only' signs carved in virtually all the portals leading to the corridors of status, and the chambers of power were still overwhelmingly inhabited by white men.

¹⁷³ A. Crump, "The 'Nature' and Status of Women", *South African Journal of Sociology* Vol. 18, No. 1, 1987, p. 25.

¹⁷⁴ *Career Woman* No. 44, 1977.

If the meaning of marriage showed signs of change, as wifehood and motherhood slowly began to diverge, and as the trend towards fewer children continued, the centrality of motherhood and domesticity remained. If wives could work, if it was becoming more acceptable for mothers with older children to seek employment outside the home, nurturing young infants and running the home remained the principal dimension of a woman's role. By 1984, the content and meaning of men's duties within the sexual division of labour remained largely unaltered. White women, on the other hand, had expanded their obligations to add paid work to unpaid domestic labour. By the early 1980s the unequal power relations between men and women, legitimised by myth, preserved by tradition and sanctioned by biology, remained largely intact, despite some women's successful invasion of men's world of work.

Chapter Three

Coming Home and Making It Work: New Directions on Old Roads 1985 - 1990

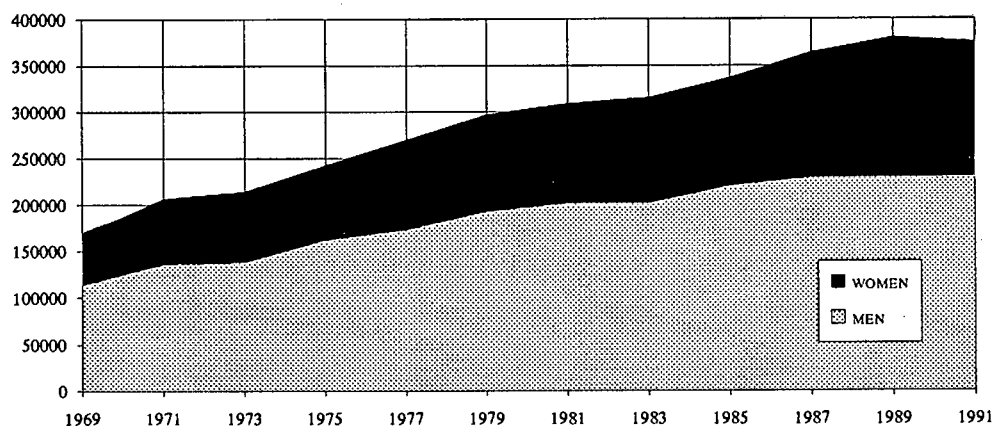
The years between 1973 and 1984 had seen substantial changes in the gender composition of the white work force. There were more jobs for women to choose from, and greater possibilities for women to climb to the top of their chosen profession. The later 1980s saw this trend continue. As illustrated in figure 1, the number of white women classified as professional, semi-professional and technical continued to increase at a faster rate than the number of men in the same category.¹

At the same time, the numbers of white women in managerial and executive positions rose faster than the numbers of men in similar positions, the former increasing from 22,646 in 1983 to 26,662 in 1991, an increase of nearly eighteen per cent.² This is illustrated in figure 2.

¹ In 1983 there were 112,958 professional, semi-professional and technically qualified women. By 1991 this had increased to 145,957, an increase of twenty nine per cent. For men in the same category the increase was from 201,798 to 229,688, an increase of just under fourteen per cent (Department of Manpower, *Manpower Survey* Vol.1, No. 15, 1983 (Pretoria: Government Printer, nd), p. 8 and Central Statistical Services, *Manpower Survey* 1991 (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1993), p. 42).

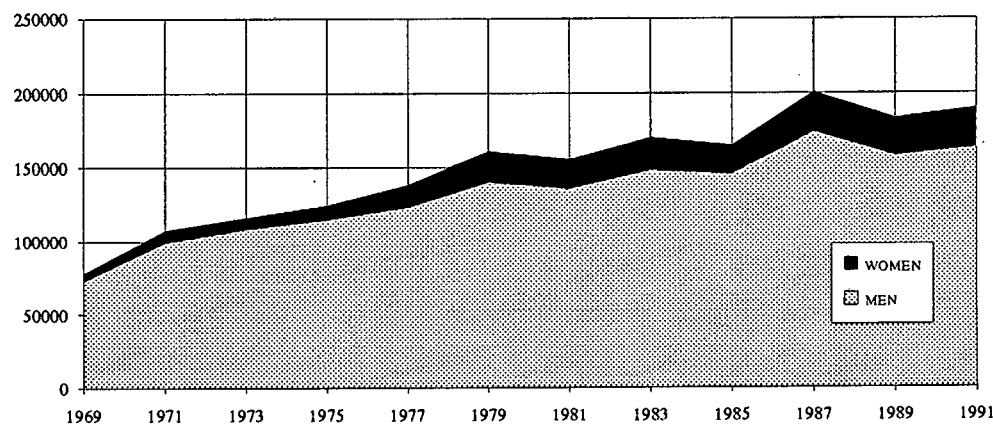
² For men in the same category, the increase was just over ten per cent (*Manpower Survey* No. 15, 1983, p. 9 and *Manpower Survey* 1991, p. 48). Prekel also observed the "steady increase in the numbers of women holding managerial positions" (T. Prekel, "Why a Special Look at Women in 1986?" *Productivity SA*, 1986, pp. 18-19).

Figure 1: Number of Professional, Semi-Professional and Technical White Workers
1969 - 1991



Source: Manpower Surveys 1969 - 1991.

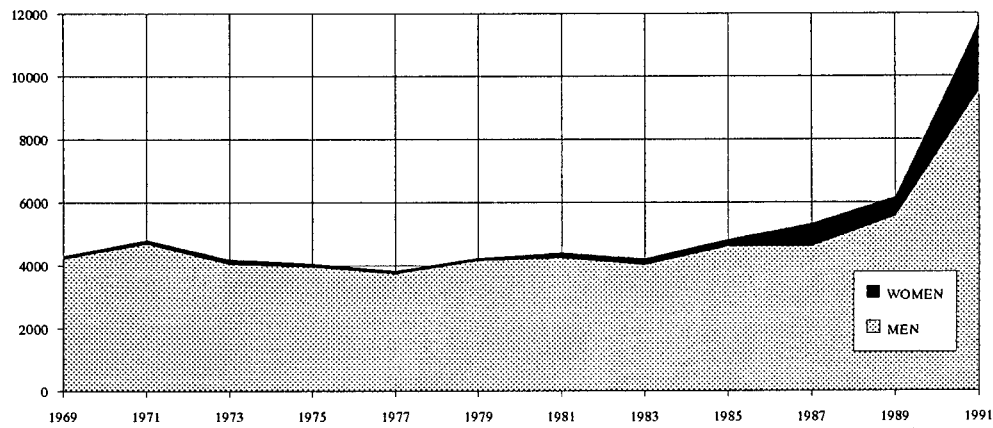
Figure 2: Number of Executive / Managerial White Workers
1969-1991



Source: Manpower Surveys 1969 - 1991.

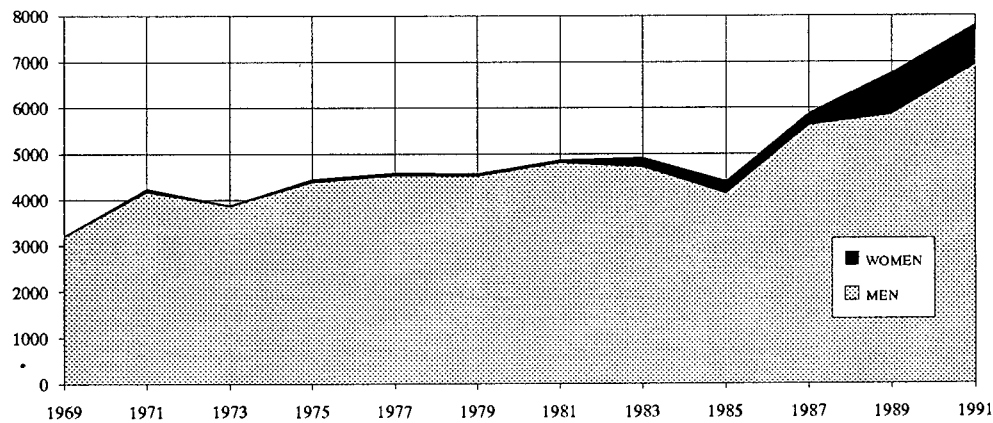
As indicated in figures 3, 4 and 5, the quantity of female lawyers shot up from 192 in 1983 to 2,138 in 1991; accountants from 217 to 884; and engineers from 118 to 226.³

Figure 3: Number of White Lawyers
1969-1991



Source: Manpower Surveys 1969 -1991.

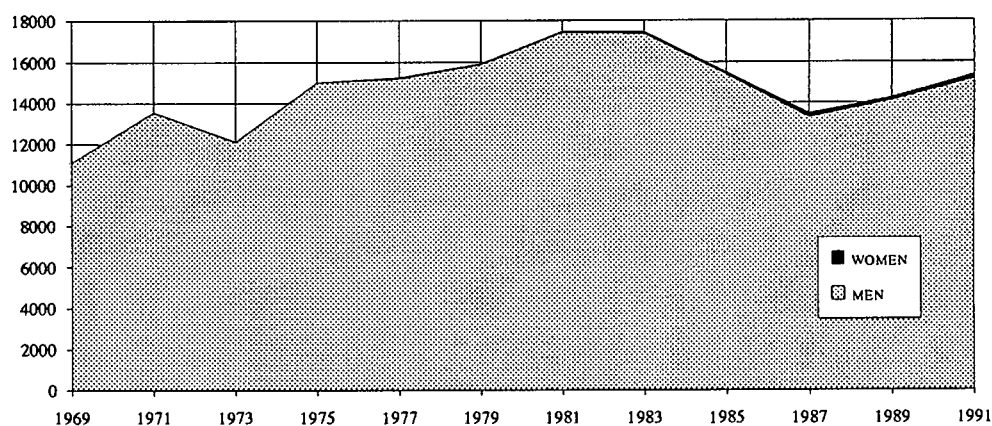
Figure 4: Number of White Accountants
1969 - 1991



Source: Manpower Surveys 1969 -1991.

³ *Manpower Survey No. 15, 1983, pp. 3, 5, 8 and Manpower Survey 1991, pp. 18, 19, 36, 38.*

Figure 5: Number of White Engineers
1969 - 1991



Source: Manpower Surveys 1969 - 1991.

The twenty three years between 1960 and 1983 saw just forty three female engineers graduate from the University of Cape Town. In merely eight years, between 1984 and 1992, one hundred and two female engineers graduated.⁴

These changes took place against a backdrop of increasing political and economic crisis. 1985 and 1986 saw the imposition and extension of widescale sanctions,⁵ against the backdrop of popular insurrection between 1984 and 1986. Massive disinvestment by multinational corporations, in conjunction with the debt crisis,⁶ left the economy desperately short of both foreign exchange and

⁴ Graduation programmes 1960 - 1992, Student Records Office, University of Cape Town.

⁵ C. Jenkins, "Sanctions, Economic Growth and Change" in N. Nattrass and E. Ardington (eds), *The Political Economy of South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 276.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

capital with which to finance economic growth. White incomes had been shrinking since 1973, and the early 1980s saw this decline accelerate.⁷ While the necessity for wives to work increased, and while white emigration may have opened up some jobs for those who remained, the availability of jobs decreased, particularly after the mid-1980s when the growth rate of the South African economy virtually collapsed.

The rate of growth of the economy declined from 1973-1980, then fell dramatically in the years after 1980 The culmination of this process came in 1985 with the debt standstill.⁸

Declining growth meant fewer job opportunities:

Only 8.4 per cent of the 390,000 people who entered the job market found jobs between 1985 and 1990, a dramatic decline from 89 per cent in the early 1960s and 49 per cent in the early seventies.⁹

The number of openings for highly skilled workers also fell. Vacancies in the professional, semi-professional and technical fields decreased by ten per cent between 1987 and 1991.¹⁰ In the same period, openings for managerial and executive workers diminished by sixty six per cent.¹¹

⁷ M. McGrath, "Economic Growth, Income Distribution and Social Change" in Nattrass and Ardington, *The Political Economy*, p. 92.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁹ *Cape Times* 2 October 1991.

¹⁰ *Manpower Survey* 1987, p. 1 and *Manpower Survey* 1991, p. 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Despite the adverse economic climate¹², the middle to late 1980s saw women consolidate their occupation of professional and managerial jobs. Larger numbers of women in the labour force at all levels impacted on advice given to working women in substantial ways, and in the mid-'80s the financial advice appearing in women's magazines increased from a trickle to a torrent. Fairly simplistic information about how to handle credit cards,¹³ for example, evolved into wide-ranging investment advice that dwelt in loving detail on different kinds of saving accounts, subscription shares, insurance policies and unit trusts. The financial ramifications of home-owning and housing loans were discussed and the workings of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange explicated. Financial management skills and techniques were explained, alongside how to negotiate overdrafts, how and why to invest in retirement annuities, endowment policies or pension schemes. Women were advised how best to assess liabilities and assets and how to make wills.¹⁴

¹²The adverse economic climate probably played an important role in promoting highly skilled women. In recession companies tend to promote from within, rather than recruit additional staff. Furthermore many of those emigrating were male professionals and their families. It is likely that at least some of these were replaced by women.

¹³ *Darling* 12 November 1980, pp. 91-95.

¹⁴ See, for example, *Cosmopolitan* October 1986, pp. 46-47; March 1987, p. 103; July 1987, p. 74; August 1987, p. 148; September 1987, p. 57; October 1987, p. 74; December 1987, p. 38; February 1988, p. 64; March 1988, p. 41; December 1988, p. 140; May 1988, p. 88; March 1989, p. 54; April 1989, p. 52; June 1989, p. 52. See also *Femina* October 1986, pp. 77 ff.; February 1986, p. 22; May 1986, pp. 74, 76; December 1986, p. 76; April 1987, pp. 72-75; February 1988, pp. 25-26; March 1988, pp. 20-21; April 1988, pp. 14, 17; July 1988, pp. 97, 99; November 1988, p. 38; April 1989, p. 73.

The South African edition of *Cosmopolitan*, available from 1984, made clear that in its opinion it "is not feminine to be helpless with figures, it's merely short sighted Money is freedom ... all women should understand money."¹⁵ Interviews with executive women began to emphasise money management. During the 1960s and 1970s these women would have been asked for cookery tips, make-up advice, or house-keeping hints; the mid-'80s saw them increasingly pursued for investment tips.¹⁶

Women's financial interests were evident in the increasing numbers of articles analysing and explicating the annual national budget and its implications for women. Alongside these articles were others advising women how to fill in their own tax forms, how to differentiate between tax avoidance and tax evasion, how to minimise tax liabilities, and explanations of new taxes such as SITE.¹⁷

The emphasis on women's assertiveness increased during the 1980s with women instructed to "blow your own trumpet".¹⁸ In marked contrast to the earlier periods, it was emphasised that "[s]ome women still worry that asserting

¹⁵ . *Cosmopolitan* September 1986, p. 70.

¹⁶ *Femina* November 1988, pp. 82 ff. The previous year *Femina* reported that in 1986 over seven per cent of shares purchased by private individuals on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange were bought by women, compared to less than four per cent in 1985 (*Femina* April 1987, p. 72).

¹⁷ See, for example, *Cosmopolitan* April 1987, pp. 94, 95; April 1988, pp. 44,45; February 1989, p. 66 and *Femina* March 1987, pp. 73, 74; February 1988, pp. 74-75; June 1990, pp. 46 ff.

¹⁸ *Femina* 28 August 1985, p. 82.

themselves will make them appear unfeminine. Assertiveness isn't masculine or feminine. It simply shows someone as responsible and effective."¹⁹

Women were told to *use* their anger rather than stifle it.²⁰ The 'yuppie' values of the 1980s encouraged individualism. Instead of sacrificing themselves for others, women were boldly encouraged to say 'me first',²¹ to "take charge of your own life and stop being so passive."²² Even *Femina* was announcing that women's needs were not what society said they were, and that women needed to assert their own needs.²³ *Cosmopolitan* aimed quizzes at working women, asking them "What kind of boss would you be?",²⁴ "How assertive are you?"²⁵ A telling indication of changing times was one that asked "Is he good for your career?"²⁶

The 1970s and early 1980s had seen a shift in emphasis from *jobs* for women to *careers* for women as well as an increasing focus towards occupations that *paid* well. A careers guidance officer explained that "[o]ne of the biggest changes that I see between the early 1970s and today is that I never have clients say to

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, February 1986, p. 32.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, January 1988, p. 78.

²¹ *Cosmopolitan* July 1985, p. 60.

²² *Ibid.*, October 1988, p. 58.

²³ *Femina* November 1990, p.126.

²⁴ *Cosmopolitan* March 1986, p. 64.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, April 1988, p. 94. See also *Ibid.*, January 1985, p. 80; March 1986, p. 64; February 1987, p. 96.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, November 1985, p. 132.

me today 'money does not mean anything, I just want to enjoy what I am doing.'"²⁷

The sorts of occupations that were recommended for women increasingly emphasised technical and professional careers where earnings were higher than in the traditionally female fields. In a special careers supplement in 1986, *Fair Lady* strongly recommended that women choose to become computer scientists, engineers or technicians.²⁸ This advice was repeated two years later, having expanded to incorporate finance, investment analysis, video, health training (as opposed to nursing), general management and human resources.²⁹ Two years later, architecture and mechanics joined the list of desirable careers for women.³⁰ That women were taking this advice is clear. By the late 1980s there was "greater acceptance of the technikon [sic] and its vocational diplomas (and less enthusiasm for the BA)."³¹

While *Fair Lady* continued to provide advice about which occupation to choose, other magazines began to focus on how to get promotion and how to be successful in the business world. The assumption that working women were located at the bottom of the ladder gave way to an assumption that often they were several rungs from the bottom, and could, in fact, be approaching the top.

²⁷ Barbara Hall, Personal Correspondence, 25 September 1993.

²⁸ Supplement to *Fair Lady* 12 November 1986.

²⁹ *Fair Lady* 20 January 1988, pp. 112-113. See also *Fair Lady* 1 April 1987, p. 89.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 17 January 1990, pp. 76-77.

³¹ Barbara Hall, Personal Correspondence, 25 September 1993.

In former years, career advice columns had always assumed that 'bosses' were male. By the late 1980s the 'boss' was often a woman.³² In earlier years, business trips were something secretaries organised for their male superiors. By the mid-'80s enough women were going on such trips to warrant several articles about how to deal with them.³³ Previously, women had attended meetings in order to take the minutes; increasingly, advice was given recommending the best way to *run* meetings.³⁴ And instead of how to become a secretary, high powered women were told how to choose one.³⁵

As more and more white women achieved a measure of success in the world of work, so attitudes towards working women showed signs of significant change. Advice columns of the 1980s show a startling contrast to those of the 1960s.

Consider the following:

Last year I gave up my career to live with a man who doesn't believe in emancipated women. It was to be a kind of trial period before we married, and now he wants me to set a date ... I get thoroughly bored at home. I've tried part-time studies, voluntary work - everything I can think of - but I miss my job.³⁶

When such women themselves attempted to adhere to traditional norms and values, the media warned against it:

³² *Femina* January 1988, p. 66; *Cosmopolitan*, April 1987, p. 64.

³³ *Femina* August 1986, pp. 71 ff; *Cosmopolitan* November 1985, p. 62; May 1988, p. 88.

³⁴ *Cosmopolitan* August 1988, p. 68.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, July 1989, p. 36.

³⁶ *Femina* 5 December 1984, p. 130.

This insistent nagging to fulfil yourself in a career is more likely to grow into full blown resentment in later years I feel you should try first to work out a compromise ... or even consider leaving him.³⁷

The same year saw *Cosmopolitan* take a similar stand. An individual wrote for advice when her boyfriend was transferred and wanted her to follow. This advice was given:

Has he ever considered looking for work in your town so he can stay near you? ... you should hold on to what you have won and earned by yourself You should stay with a promising and self-sufficient future.³⁸

The contrast with the earlier periods is marked. Where the '60s had seen married women who wished to work strongly chastised for the neglect of the family and home it would entail, the mid-'80s saw many women's magazines predict problems for women attempting to give up work for marriage. In this period, the media consistently counselled women to strive for self-sufficiency and self-fulfilment through paid employment, and to give up immediate prospects of marriage in favour of establishing their economic independence. Women were advised to question men's assumptions about both male and female roles, and to assert women's right to self-fulfilment.

This advice, however, did not go so far as to advise women *never* to marry. And even if women and women's magazines recommended staying single, at least for a time, others saw things differently. As one woman recounted,

On recently being interviewed for a senior position with a large company, I was somewhat annoyed at having to explain and

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Cosmopolitan* April 1984, p. 28.

justify my '30 and never married status'. Not as shocked however as I was to learn from my previous boss, who had been contacted for a reference, that he'd been interrogated as to my heterosexuality.³⁹

Whereas being single engendered pity during the 1960s and early 1970s, for 'failing' as a woman, it became increasingly acceptable to women during the 1980s; nonetheless it remained a threat to male norms and standards, engendering suspicion and distrust on the part of the male establishment.

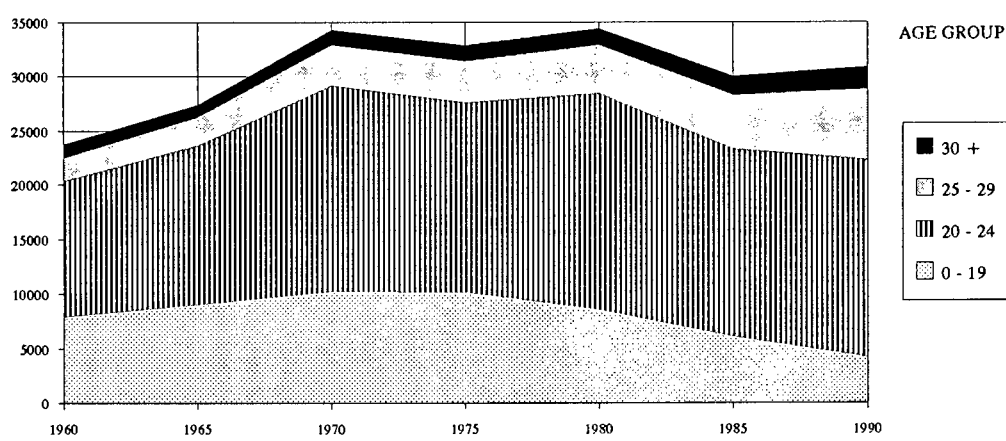
Those who never married, or those who were widowed or divorced, were still asked *why* they did not marry. Staying single was represented as the consequence of a deliberate decision. If single women were increasingly portrayed as 'normal,' they were still constructed as 'other' in terms of adherence to social norms and practices. Married women were never asked *why* they married.

Most women did conform, marrying sooner or later, although for more and more it was later rather than sooner, after establishing themselves in one field or another. Statistics compiled by the Central Statistical Service describe substantial change in the timing of women's decisions to enter matrimony, as illustrated in figure 6. In 1960, thirty three per cent of white women married before they reached twenty years of age. By 1985, only twenty per cent of white women married before the age of twenty, and more and more women were waiting until their late twenties and early thirties before becoming brides.⁴⁰

³⁹ *Fair Lady* 3 September 1986, p. 7.

⁴⁰ In 1960, eighty six per cent of single women married before they reached the age of twenty five (Bureau of Statistics, *Report on Marriages and Divorces, 1960* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1967), pp. 14 and 17; Central

Figure 6: Age of Marriage of Spinsters
1969 - 1990



Source: Reports on Marriages and Divorces 1960 - 1990.

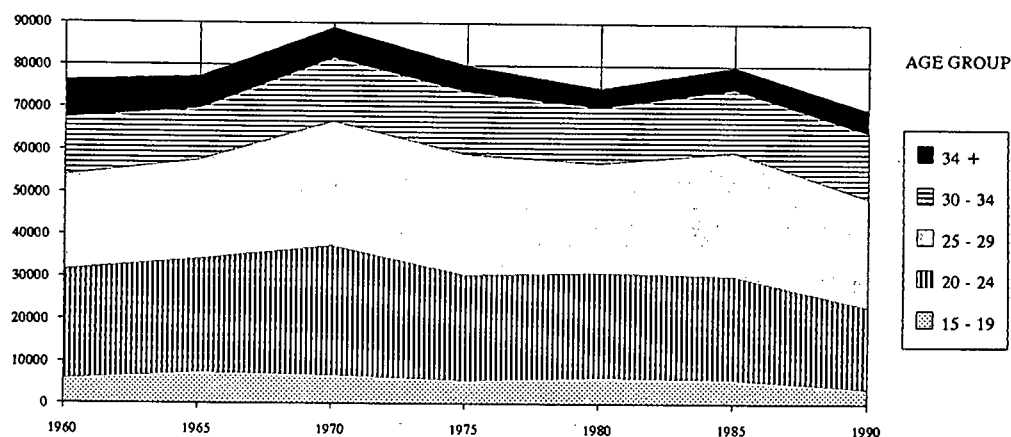
And if the march to the altar was postponed, if only for a few years, so too, were children. Trends begun in the early '70s continued during the '80s as illustrated in figure 7. More women were having fewer children and having them later in life; there were over ten thousand fewer white babies born in 1990 than in 1985.⁴¹ In 1960, over forty one per cent of total births were to women under the age of twenty four. By 1990, only thirty three per cent of births were to this age group. Almost forty seven per cent of births in 1960 were to women

Statistical Services, *Report on Marriages and Divorces, 1985* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1986), p. 9).

⁴¹ In 1985, 79,863 white babies were born (Department of Statistics, *Report on Births, 1985* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1987), p. 50), and only 69,649 in 1990 (Central Statistical Services, *Report on Births, 1990* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1992), p. 69).

aged between twenty five and thirty four. By 1990 this had risen substantially: the latter age group contributed over fifty nine per cent of total births.⁴²

Figure 7: Number of White Births
1969 - 1991



Source: Report on Marriages and Divorces 1960 -1990.

For white women, delaying marriage, postponing pregnancy, and bearing fewer babies increased their availability for paid employment. And by the mid-1980s, it was expected that wives would work. Where married women attained high status by staying at home in the 1960s, by the late 1980s one magazine correspondent had observed that women who chose to be full-time housewives experienced a loss of status when they left the work force.⁴³

⁴² Bureau of Statistics, *Report on Births, 1960* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1965), p. 21; *Report on Births, 1990*, p. 69.

⁴³ *Fair Lady* 6 July 1988, p. 110.

It was believed that careers could and should be established before starting a family, and having fewer children meant that fewer 'nurturing years' needed to be spent at home. At the same time, the debates during the 1960s and 1970s had turned full circle. By the mid-1980s, experts, many of whom were women and mothers themselves, were employed to argue that working mothers were as good for children as those that stayed at home.

Thus Dr Adele Tomas, the director of Johannesburg's Child Welfare Department, pointed out that a mother could "spend twenty four hours a day with her child and still neglect him".⁴⁴ In an article entitled "Why children are not harmed when their mothers work", *Cosmopolitan* agreed that "for the same reason that having a job won't damage your child, not having a job won't guarantee not damaging your child".⁴⁵ *Fair Lady* developed this idea further, citing a male professional who pointed out the twisted logic of a society that blamed "anything that goes wrong with the child on the fact that the mother works" where "even if the child turns out to be a success ... he succeeded in spite of his mother's job."⁴⁶ And *Fair Lady* even organised and publicised special seminars to help working mothers remove or alleviate the feelings of guilt experienced by their perceived neglect.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *Femina* November 1986, p. 92.

⁴⁵ *Cosmopolitan* May 1987, p. 84.

⁴⁶ *Fair Lady* 10 June 1987, p. 125.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

The fundamental distinction, however, remained firmly entrenched in social norms and values. Children were women's work. Whether women did this work themselves, whether they employed professionals to do it for them, whether they used the services of their black domestic servants,⁴⁸ the responsibility remained their own.⁴⁹ There were no seminars dealing with paternal feelings of guilt for leaving children at home, simply because fathers did not expect to have to care for their children and could not feel guilty for something that was not ascribed as their responsibility.

If child care remained the province of women, so too did home maintenance. *Fair Lady* pointed out that "there may be a revolution going on the work place, but back at home it's business as usual."⁵⁰ Working outside the home simply meant replanning chores, not reassigning them. For example, an article advising women on how best to cope with a family and a career advised women to buy a microwave oven.⁵¹ This purchase meant that women could still be responsible for feeding the family, allowing both men and women to avoid the

⁴⁸ Budlender suggests that by 1990, white households were actually employing fewer full-time domestic workers (D. Budlender, "Women and The Economy" (Paper presented at the Women and Gender in Southern Africa Conference, University of Natal, Durban, 1991), p. 11).

⁴⁹ Even if fathers were eager to assume shared responsibility for child care, male bosses were likely to question the need for the father to take little Johnny to the dentist. As the *Argus* put it, "[w]hat good is a new man if he works for an old fashioned boss?" (*Argus*: "Argus Woman" 3 March 1992, p. 9)

⁵⁰ *Fair Lady* 23 May 1990, p. 136.

⁵¹ *Femina* 5 June 1985, p. 95.

necessity of adapting their gender roles. Similarly, the introduction of prepared meals in supermarkets such as Woolworths and Pick 'n Pay facilitated women's perpetuation of their domestic roles by obviating the need for husbands to take a shared responsibility for feeding the family.

Despite changes in technology and a degree of change in the work place, for many women combining work and home, or, more specifically work and child care, remained a difficult task; for many, falling pregnant meant losing their jobs.⁵² It was only at the very end of the 1980s that a few firms introduced maternity benefits by supplementing the meagre forty five per cent of salaries paid to some women by the Unemployment Insurance Fund.⁵³ Warner Lambert, in Cape Town, added thirty three per cent of an employee's salary to the forty five per cent paid by the Fund at the end of 1990, and introduced an on-site preschool in January 1991.⁵⁴ Only in the early 1990s were Woolworths

⁵² Almost twenty five per cent of a survey of working women said that pregnancy would mean losing their job (Women's Legal Status Committee, *A Survey of Working Women in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Women's Legal Status Committee, 1987), p. 14).

⁵³ Prior to this, a maternity benefit of forty five per cent of a worker's salary was paid for four weeks before and eight weeks after confinement, and only for those who qualified in terms of UIF contributions. Given that female employees tended to be amongst the poorer paid, this was often very little. And there was no guarantee that the job would be kept open. In contrast, white males doing national service were guaranteed re-employment, were not penalised in terms of broken service, and while companies were not obliged to pay them, some (Woolworths for one) paid national servicemen full salaries in their absence (*Memorandum on Women*, pp. 30-31, 43).

⁵⁴ Sadie Hendricks, Warner Lambert, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 19 October 1993.

employees given ten months leave, with UIF topped up with thirty per cent of their salaries.⁵⁵ In one sense these changes represented an important step forward for working women. Official recognition that women workers required special arrangements took cognisance of women's particular role in society. But at the same time it legitimated that role and facilitated the non-participation of husbands in child care. An exception was the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union's agreement, winning the right to eleven months *parental* leave for staff at Pick and Pay, nine months of it being paid.⁵⁶

Yet, if a handful of firms made some effort to improve benefits for women by recognising their responsibility for child rearing, others provided little more than the bare minimum. Old Mutual Assurance allowed women up to six months' unpaid leave, as did First National Bank. First National also required women taking maternity leave to return company cars and suspended their pensions. Anglo-American provided just the three months allowed by law; Foschini allowed six months' unpaid leave. In the public sector unmarried women were given no maternity leave at all, while married women were given the option of resigning or taking unpaid leave.⁵⁷

The mid-1980s, then, saw women continuing their attempts to rationalise and reconcile their socially prescribed duties of child-bearing and rearing with paid

⁵⁵ Lisa Halleck, Woolworths, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 19 October 1993.

⁵⁶ *Fair Lady* 9 May 1990, pp. 106-109; *Femina* January 1989, p. 8.

⁵⁷ *Fair Lady* 9 May 1990, pp. 106-109.

employment. Changes in the work place, largely in response to lobbying by women's groups and to some extent by trade unions, had resulted in *some* of the demands of the 1970s being achieved for *some* women, but even then only during the late 1980s or early 1990s.

The unarticulated assumption that child care was, is and will be women's responsibility underpinned the efforts of those lobbying for maternity benefits. Even the Business and Professional Women's Club threw itself wholeheartedly into the campaign for maternity as opposed to parental benefits. The Club also complained that if, at last, a few companies were beginning to provide maternity benefits, almost none had even considered the idea of assisting mothers of older children.⁵⁸

If maternity benefits and assistance with child care remained elusive, so too did removal of discriminatory practices entrenched in the private and public sectors.⁵⁹ In the public sector, married women were excluded from the state housing loan/subsidy scheme, could not register dependents on the state medical aid scheme and had pension benefits that were worse than those of men. The private sector was little better. First National Bank, for example, excluded

⁵⁸ *Femina* October 1989, p. 83.

⁵⁹ According to Prekel, personnel managers often decide that women are not transferable or promotable. Managers often will not consider women for positions that involve travelling, do not believe that mothers should work while their children are young, assume that women do not want promotion, and discriminate against them in terms of job classification and/or salaries (Prekel, "Why a Special Look", pp. 18-19).

married women from the housing scheme and discriminated against married women in terms of pensions.⁶⁰ And discrimination was not confined to company benefits and company perks.

Although some women had managed to gain access to the new and higher paid fields, many others struggled against entrenched discriminatory attitudes and practices.⁶¹ In 1986 a letter to *Femina* recorded that an engineering job was given to a man rather than a woman because the firm concerned thought "she might leave to get married and start a family after a few years, wasting the money on her training."⁶² Another woman recounted how she was asked at an interview: "how can you assure us that a young attractive woman like yourself will remain a career woman?"⁶³ Even when highly trained and highly educated women were appointed in occupations previously reserved for men, discrimination in terms of promotional opportunities and pay remained.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ *Fair Lady* 9 May 1990, pp. 106-109. See also Women's Legal Status Committee, *A Survey of Working Women*, p. 3: Forty two per cent of the women surveyed considered that they were discriminated against in terms of "perks, fringe benefits, company cars, housing loans etc".

⁶¹ In a survey of working women, almost half the women surveyed (forty five per cent) perceived that being a woman impeded or blocked their chances of advancement (Women's Legal Status Committee, *A Survey of Working Women*, p. 17).

⁶² *Femina* May 1986, p. 8.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 6 November 1985, p. 9.

⁶⁴ The Women's Legal Status Committee survey of working women found that forty six per cent considered themselves to be discriminated against in terms of wages or salaries, while another eighteen per cent felt that discrimination had prevented them from getting jobs they wanted (*A Survey of Working Women*, p. 3).

Jenny Marot, a geologist, was employed as an *acting* Section Head from 1982 to 1989, a period of seven years. The general manager's assistant explained why:

We don't need to promote you because you won't leave anyway. This is more or less as high as you'll be able to get anyway, and there's no need to keep you by making it more attractive.⁶⁵

She was finally promoted when the general manager died, in 1989.⁶⁶

While some women reached top positions in the work place, a substantial number were trapped at the lower levels. The business world, while increasingly occupied by women, remained dominated by white men. In 1991, of a total of 672,461 white female employees,⁶⁷ fully 495,335,⁶⁸ almost seventy four per cent, were either teachers, nurses or clerical workers. By the mid-1980s teaching posts for white women were becoming scarce, and married women could not in any event be appointed to permanent posts. While nursing was suitable for single women, the twelve hour shifts created problems for those

⁶⁵ Jenny Marot, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 26 October 1993.

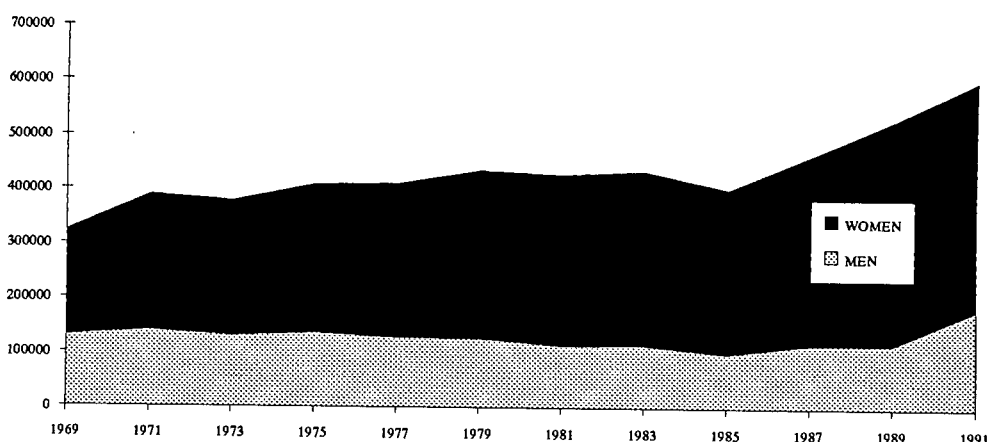
⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Manpower Survey* 1991, p. 5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 34, 55.

with children,⁶⁹ and the existing job climate meant that white men were competing for administrative and clerical jobs.⁷⁰

Figure 8: Number of Administrative and Clerical White Workers
1969 - 1991



Source: Manpower Surveys 1969 - 1991.

Instead of offering women a means for overcoming oppression, paid employment thus tended, for many women, to confirm their subordination, particularly those confined to lower paying jobs with relatively little prospect of promotion.

⁶⁹ The number of white nurses had peaked in 1979, at 31,186, and dropped to 29,916 by 1991 (Department of Manpower Utilisation, *Manpower Survey* No. 13, 1979 (Pretoria: Government Printer, nd), p. 4; *Manpower Survey* 1991, p. 32). S. Marks provides more detail about the changes in the nursing profession in her "The Nursing Profession and the Paradox of Apartheid" (Paper presented at the Women and Gender in Southern Africa Conference, University of Natal, Durban, 1991).

⁷⁰ For the first time, the number of white men entering lower paid administrative and clerical jobs increased faster than the number of women entering the same kinds of jobs. The number of men in these jobs grew by fifty nine per cent, while the number of women increased by just thirty one per cent, between 1983 and 1991 (*Manpower Survey* No. 15, 1983, p. 10; *Manpower Survey* 1991, p. 55).

While the geologist cited earlier was prepared to tolerate the discrimination against her, others were not. Those who had academic qualifications found themselves becoming disillusioned or frustrated as they encountered the glass ceilings and the discrimination of the male business world:

One of the reasons I started my own business was that I got so angry with all the promises that were never kept They manipulate women, I think Also he employed a man after I got there, who came in at a much higher salary and got a car and everything, really infuriated me because I knew I was doing half that man's work as well Up front jobs are always given to guys.⁷¹

Qualified women who saw promotion as being within reach sometimes felt that it would mean changing their jobs into something less desirable. As a librarian who resigned from her job in 1986 explained,

"[I had] been in the library for about fifteen years and I didn't want to go any further - promotion would have meant getting into administrative work, you know, pushing paper around ... I like being with the students ... and I thought I've done this, I've gone as far as I can go ... the thought of waiting for twenty four years just for a pension, sticking it out in the same job just didn't appeal to me."⁷²

Others with practical experience rather than academic qualifications felt that their prospects for advancement and better remuneration were limited. Lindsay Loggie, a single woman, who had worked in several hotels as assistant manager, remembered deciding to start her own restaurant:

⁷¹ Lyn Bryer, Interview, 15 June 1993.

⁷² Jane Brown (not her real name), interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 8 February 1993.

I just said no! This is for the birds! I can do it myself! And I wasn't earning very much, just R500 a month for those kind of hours and there was no way a woman was going to get onto top management, I'd got as high as I could get which was assistant manager of the Hotel.⁷³

By the mid-1980s, staying at home as a full-time housewife was becoming less financially viable,⁷⁴ as husbands' incomes were increasingly insufficient to support 'dependents' in a white middle class lifestyle. Meanwhile, jobs, either part-time or full-time, were harder to find. For many, the only alternative was to put into practice the ideas of the late 1970s and early 1980s, and start a business from home.⁷⁵

In this, South Africa reflected international trends. As Hertz described it for American women, "[i]n a most positive sense, entrepreneurship is the last resort for many women."⁷⁶ For some white South African women, it was their lack of

⁷³ Lindsay Loggie, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 15 February 1993.

⁷⁴ According to the Women's Legal Status Committee's *Survey of Working Women*, p. 10, fully eighty six per cent of women worked for financial reasons. Also, South African research indicated that the more a husband earned, the less likely it was his wife would work (M. Maconachie, "Dual-Earner Couples: Factors Influencing Whether and When White Married Women Join The Labour Force", *South African Journal of Sociology* Vol. 20, No. 3, 1989, p. 148).

⁷⁵ According to the *Manpower Surveys* (No. 16, 1985, p. 11 and 1991, p. 44), there were 625 female managing directors in 1985, and 3,658 in 1991. This is likely to severely underestimate the number of women earning money from home-based businesses as many operate in the informal sector which, by definition, is difficult to assess.

⁷⁶ R. Hertz, cited in D. Clutterbuck and M. Devine, "Is Entrepreneurship the Way Ahead for Women?" in D. Clutterbuck and M. Devine (eds), *Businesswomen: Present and Future* (Hong Kong: Macmillan Press, 1987), p. 135. See also R. Goffee and R. Scase, *Women in Charge: The Experiences*

formal education that denied them alternatives, and pushed them into starting up their own business. As was explained by a married mother (since divorced), who opened a gift shop after her children entered secondary school:

[m]y children were off my hands, and you know, you can't stay at home and I didn't have any formal further education, so I couldn't go teaching, any of those things I think it's becoming more common for a woman to do that [open a shop]. You don't need an education I didn't really have much of a choice It is definitely a lack of choice.⁷⁷

Those who had trained and worked after school felt that the time spent away from the work place, building a home and having a family, had adversely affected their saleable skills. They believed that employers simply would not want them. Deborah Smith, a mother of three who had stopped nursing when she married, and who started her own business after her divorce, explained:

As a mother who's been at home you don't necessarily have the right sort of skills My skills might be high on the one hand, but I've never typed, I've never used a computer, and I think a lot of women who suddenly need to work or want to work also have that feeling, that they've learnt a lot about a lot of things in life, but when it comes to walking into an employment agency and filling in a form You have these highly manicured ladies that say 'Oh. Don't you type? Or haven't you had experience in this or that?'.... What jobs could we get?⁷⁸

of *Female Entrepreneurs* (London: George, Allen and Unwin, 1985), p. 40 for a similar view of British women.

⁷⁷ Reinette Camphor, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 14 February 1993.

⁷⁸ Deborah Smith, interviewed by the author, 17 February 1993.

Elizabeth Murray, finding herself the unemployed victim of recession, took the decision to start a company from home:

The company went bust and literally overnight I was unemployed. That happened in November, and I remember it clearly because I was desperate, it was Christmas ... and I sat there wondering what am I going to do with my life? And so that Christmas holidays ... we were going through things like 'what hasn't South Africa got?' We read up about scent and wax, and candles and all sorts.⁷⁹

While there were obviously a variety of reasons for white women either leaving or not entering the formal world of work, the benefits of working from home made it a viable alternative. Home-based work remained an attractive option in the mid to late '80s for the same reasons as in the earlier period. Deborah Smith, who eventually started a home furnishing business, explained:

I employ, or rather use other women in business, there must be about ... ten of us Some I use more than others and they are all women who do basically what I'm doing except that I'm the coordinator, so I'm surrounded by women doing work for themselves from home, and practically all of them do it because it's the easiest way of bringing up children.⁸⁰

Another informant agreed:

I think women should be at home and that's exactly why there are so many women run businesses from their home. I think it's ideal ... if the man is working out there, so you work too, so you work in the house, keep it nice, keep it clean, bring up your kids, that's the best years of your life when your kids are small.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Elizabeth Murray, interviewed by the author, 16 June 1993.

⁸⁰ Deborah Smith, Interview, 17 February 1993.

⁸¹ Reinette Camphor, Interview, 4 February 1993.

Working from home enabled female bread-winners to support their children economically and emotionally. Similarly, married mothers were able to help their husbands fulfil their financial obligations, without neglecting their domestic duties.

The idea of women working from home continued to find favour in the media during the 1980s for the same kinds of reasons it was popular in the earlier period. Concrete ideas for making money also showed little change. The cooking, typing, dressmaking, knitting and child care activities that were recommended during the sixties remained the most popular selections of many magazines during the 1980s. 1985 saw *Femina* run a series of cookery articles called "Cooking for Cash" which suggested that home-based women could make some extra cash by cooking (on a small scale) for others.⁸² *Fair Lady*, while advertising a book entitled *Hundreds of Ways to Make Money From Home*, recommended looking after working people's dogs, knitting socks, shopping for others, child care, and sewing as potential money-makers for home-based women.⁸³

Yet there was an element of change buried beneath the continuity. While *Fair Lady* had tracked down a few women who worked from home during the 1970s, these were generally women who were making hobbies pay, or who were subordinate partners in their husbands' businesses, or who were unfortunate enough to be widowed, divorced or unmarried. By the mid-1980s the focus had

⁸² *Femina* "Cooking For Cash", September 1988, p. 118; October 1988, p. 138; November 1988, p. 144; December 1988, p. 120.

⁸³ *Fair Lady* 7 December 1988, p. 146.

shifted slightly. Women who considered themselves to be housewives, earning money by cashing in on their 'talents'⁸⁴ while staying at home with the children, began to give way to women who considered themselves to be business women who worked from home. A professional attitude towards money making began to creep into articles about such women.

Women working from home, or women who started their business by working at home, both black and white, were featured in almost every edition of *Fair Lady* during the later 1980s. While some of these women were still making 'pocket money' from a hobby, more and more were earning a substantial living. From the mid-1980s *Fair Lady*, for example, had little difficulty finding women, particularly white women, whose businesses had made them extremely wealthy as a consequence of their own efforts. Features on businesses started by women, with turnovers of several million rands, became increasingly commonplace.⁸⁵ While these success stories illustrated what could be done, it was clear that most of these businesses had started small, and that several had been started by women working from home.

Encouragement by the media was supplemented by the state: starting a small business began to be portrayed as a woman's duty. Where the 1960s had seen women urged to enter the labour force in order to do their duty to their country,

⁸⁴ See *Fair Lady* "Money Spinners", 10 August 1983, pp. 72-77, and "Be Your Own Boss", 4 April 1984, pp. 124-7.

⁸⁵ See for example the following editions of *Fair Lady*: 10 July 1985, p. 67; 11 December 1985, pp. 104-6; 8 January 1986, pp. 56-59; 22 January 1986, pp. 94-96; 9 July 1986, pp. 128-129; 24 December 1986, pp. 110-111; 4 March 1987, pp. 122-124; 16 September 1987, pp. 142-5; 30 September 1987, pp. 138-140; 22 June 1988, pp. 106-9; 10 May 1989, pp. 112-6.

the 1980s saw the ideology adjust to the new conditions. Women were encouraged to start small businesses that could create employment and lift South Africa out of a recession.⁸⁶

The notion that small, home-based businesses could reduce unemployment was taken up enthusiastically by the apartheid state in the mid-1980s. Hoping to encourage the formation of "black proto-capitalists" who would "act as a conservative influence on the poorer black classes",⁸⁷ the government began to relax legislation surrounding informal sector activities. From the mid-'80s those who found themselves on the margins of the formal economy, both blacks and women, took increasing advantage of the opportunities emerging from the dissolution of some of the old restraints.

As information about women who had started successful businesses became more widely available, so too did information about *how* to start a business. Interviews with women who had their own companies, whether small or large, generally finished with suggestions as to how readers could emulate them; the difficulties these women had faced were detailed and advice given as to how these could best be overcome.⁸⁸ *Fair Lady* discussed the legal requirements of running a small business from home as early as 1983,⁸⁹ and publicised a seminar

⁸⁶ *Fair Lady* 26 November 1986, p. 161.

⁸⁷ P. Wellings and M. Sutcliffe, "Developing The Urban Informal Sector in South Africa", *Development and Change* Vol. 15, London, 1984, p. 524.

⁸⁸ *Fair Lady* "Small Business Savvy", 16 September 1987, pp. 142-5.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 10 August 1983, pp. 72-77.

organised by the Homepower Register in 1985.⁹⁰ By the mid-1980s several books giving guidelines to budding entrepreneurs had been published locally,⁹¹ while the Small Business Development Corporation provided pamphlets from 1986.⁹² *Femina* advertised a course of distance learning for prospective entrepreneurs run by the Small Business Development Corporation,⁹³ while the formation of the Home Business Centre in Johannesburg offering an "advisory service, a meeting place, demonstrations on the latest equipment and discounts on supplies" was announced in 1989.⁹⁴ Even *Women's Forum*, a magazine that had firmly subscribed to the belief that a woman's place was with her children, began to provide information about working from home.⁹⁵ That women were interested and enthusiastic about the idea of working from home was apparent. A Home Entrepreneurship seminar organised by *Cosmopolitan* and the Women's Bureau in 1986 drew 2,500 participants.⁹⁶

By the late 1980s several competitions aimed at locating, encouraging and assisting new entrepreneurs had been established. 1987 saw the first Small

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, "Homework", 25 December 1985, p. 89.

⁹¹ See, for example, W. Barney, *Proven Ways of Making Money: a Plan for Every Man and Woman* (Durban: Good Fortune Publications, 1985).

⁹² SBDC Pamphlets 1986 ff. are available in the South African Public Library.

⁹³ *Femina* November 1988, p. 8.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, April 1989, p. 20.

⁹⁵ *Women's Forum* No. 00B26, 1985, pp. 92-96. (This periodical was published monthly, but the month was not indicated on each edition. In addition, the holding at the South African Public Library is incomplete, so it was not possible to ascertain the month to which No. 00B26 refers.)

⁹⁶ *Femina* November 1989, p. 58.

Business Woman of the Year competition, established by *Sarie* and Old Mutual, attract 160 entries.⁹⁷ The following year *Fair Lady* joined forces with Southern Life to create the Business Starter awards, presenting R30,000 each year to the winner or winners with the best business plans.⁹⁸

The explosion of information concerning starting up a business and self-employment was noticed by the magazines' readers. As one informant remembered,

I think that [in] every magazine you opened in the eighties there was 'how to start a business at home' and competitions, you know, starting a new business I think *Fair Lady* still ... runs competitions like that to start your own business.⁹⁹

But the active encouragement of the media was not sufficient for several women. Often the support of family or friends was required before individuals were emboldened to take the risks inherent in starting up a new venture.¹⁰⁰ Jane Brown, apprehensive about leaving her job as a librarian, felt that the encouragement of friends was very important:

I needed somebody to say 'Yes, this is a good idea', so I went to somebody that a friend of mine regards very highly, thinks she's a wise woman So I said 'Well, I've got this opportunity to start off a business and I don't know what to do'. And she and a friend of hers who was there, she's over

⁹⁷ *Focus* Part 5, No. 4, June 1987.

⁹⁸ *Fair Lady* 16 March 1988, pp. 80-85.

⁹⁹ Reinette Camphor, Interview, 4 February 1993.

¹⁰⁰ Erwee also notes that encouragement from family or friends was important to female entrepreneurs in South Africa (R. Erwee, "Entrepreneurship as a Career Option for Women: An Overview of Research", *South African Journal of Sociology* Vol. 18, No. 3, 1987, p. 159).

80, and the friend was about 70, so I said I wanted to give up my job and sell my house ... and go and learn to make violins, they both said 'Oh Yes! Oh Yes!' and flung their hands in the air, 'Oh Yes, my dear.' And I thought it was so amazing for these old people to be so positive So I thought oh, well You know I just needed a bit of a push.¹⁰¹

Another informant, Elizabeth Murray, found the support coming from her second husband, who was seriously ill and thus at home:

Suddenly I was in a marriage where it was very free, and Frans was encouraging me to take this career and go, and every time I got despondent, which was often, he would give me this incredible fillip to go ahead and do it. And he used to very quietly sit here and he used to phone people he knew and get contacts, and get me little orders, or get people to phone me and give me input.¹⁰²

Yet while friends or family could provide support, they could also potentially undermine confidence. Jane Brown was greeted by a mixed reception from her family and co-workers:

Some of my friends and colleagues ... said 'what about your pension?' but most of them ... said go for it But my mother ... she was a little bit apprehensive.¹⁰³

Others also found their families and friends very worried, at least in the beginning. "Everyone told me I was mad," recalled one woman.¹⁰⁴ Another remembered that:

¹⁰¹ Jane Brown, Interview, 8 February 1993.

¹⁰² Elizabeth Murray, Interview, 16 June 1993.

¹⁰³ Jane Brown, Interview, 8 February 1993.

¹⁰⁴ Lindsay Loggie, Interview, 15 February 1993.

My mother was very worried, she thought I was definitely going to land up in the debtors' court somewhere along the line, but I think she's quite proud, you know?¹⁰⁵

The support of family or friends remained more important than that of any of the formal business organisations. None of the women interviewed in this study was assisted by any business organisation. Even after these women had established their own businesses, such kinds of support systems were seen as superfluous. Deborah Smith explained why she thought them unnecessary:

I think that I get enough support and feedback and what have you ... because I work so closely with [several women] ... we are quite a close sort of family, and once a year we all get together ... and we learn from one another ... I know at least ten or twelve women working for themselves. I find that adequate.¹⁰⁶

Judy Badenhurst remembered rejecting overtures from the Executive Woman's Club:

"Someone asked me to join, it was Jane Raphaely ... asked me to join the Executive Woman's Club, but ... I was too busy you see ... I'm not really interested in that sort of thing ... we've got so much on our plates we'd lose out somewhere else."¹⁰⁷

A shop owner explained why she had resigned from the Chamber of Commerce:

I was a member of the Chamber of Commerce for a couple of years, but then I found out that it was costing me money but I didn't get any benefit from it I don't really know what benefits I expected at the time, but I just felt ... what does it

¹⁰⁵ Deborah Smith, Interview, 17 February 1993.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Judy Badenhurst, Interview, 16 February 1993.

help me? I think it helps people who are in bigger businesses.¹⁰⁸

Essentially, neither business organisations nor women's organisations provided the kind of services required by these particular entrepreneurs. Although women tended to enter fields with which they were familiar, thus minimising potential obstacles, most confronted problems of some sort. Women's business organisations, such as those discussed above, appear to have served the elite who had surmounted such difficulties.

The contention that women tended to enter traditionally female fields is supported by the observations of both British and American analysts: "The pattern of self-employment and female proprietorship tends to reflect the character and spread of female employment within the economy as a whole."¹⁰⁹ South African research, whilst meagre, records similar trends.¹¹⁰ Given that in 1991 almost three quarters of employed white women were clerical workers, teachers or nurses, very few had the technical knowledge to move confidently into completely new fields. Problems and difficulties face any individual aspiring to own and run her own business; these are compounded when women attempt to enter what, historically, have been defined as male arenas.

¹⁰⁸ Reinette Camphor, Interview, 4 February 1993.

¹⁰⁹ Goffee and Scase, *Women in Charge*, p. 9. See also K. Loscocco, J. Robinson, R. Hall and J. Allen, "Gender and Small Business Success: An Inquiry into Women's Relative Disadvantage", *Social Forces* Vol. 70, No. 1, September 1991, p. 80; Watkins and Watkins argue that prior employment experience acts as an 'incubator' leading women into stereotypically 'female' businesses (J. Watkins and D. Watkins, "The Female Entrepreneur: Background and Determinants of Business Choice", *International Small Business Journal* Vol. 2, No. 4, 1984, p. 29).

¹¹⁰ Erwee, "Entrepreneurship", p. 158.

Jane Brown, the ex-librarian mentioned earlier, had to overcome a number of gender-based handicaps before she successfully established her violin-making business:

Not being in the trade, or having done woodwork at school, like men or boys. They know what to ask for. They know that this is called a bolt or So I mean it was difficult because some of the things I didn't even know that they actually existed.¹¹¹

Deborah Smith likewise observed that when she was young, boys and girls tended to learn different things as children, and that this influenced their capacity to move successfully into particular fields as adults:

It's like my ex-husband's father had a paint factory, and he used to go and work there in the holidays and spend a lot of time *with* his dad, and even now there's odd snippets of information that he learnt then, surprisingly, because he's not a practical person, and when it comes to factories and machinery and odd funny things he learnt a lot as a child.¹¹²

Elizabeth Murray, founder of a paper-making business, having trained as a teacher, found that her scientific knowledge was inadequate:

I'm hopeless at maths, I'm not a mathematician, I'm not a chemist So chemistry and mathematics is a nightmare to me. Engineering. But there I was, fiddling about with chemicals and desperately trying to understand the composition of different fibres because that's what you make paper of.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Jane Brown, Interview, 8 February 1993.

¹¹² Deborah Smith, Interview, 17 February 1993.

¹¹³ Elizabeth Murray, Interview, 16 June 1993.

Even when she overcame the raw material problems, others remained:

I needed to press some paper and I didn't know how the hell we were going to do this to get enough pressure, so we reversed my car into the studio, put the paper on the floor, put a jack on with all the sheets like that and then jacked the car up.¹¹⁴

Even if women entered fields traditionally associated with their sex, problems remained. One of these was access to capital to fund the venture.¹¹⁵ Research in South Africa, supporting observations elsewhere, indicates that women tended to establish businesses in fields that required the minimum in capital outlay,¹¹⁶ often starting off by taking advantage of existing household appliances such as sewing machines and ovens. Inevitably, this rather restricted the range of choices available. Although it might appear that the paper company would require higher levels of finance than other companies, paper-making was selected precisely because it apparently required the least capital outlay.¹¹⁷ The tendency to limit the financial costs involved was linked to the difficulties of finding external financing. When the women interviewed for this study needed

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Research in both the United States and Britain indicates that women are disadvantaged relative to men in terms of access to financial resources. According to Simpson, "[s]election criteria giving access to financial resources often conspire against women ... they often require more than a modest starting capital, they look for a particular track record in terms of previous experience, they demand particular growth objectives, they look for a certain employment potential and are frequently restricted to the manufacturing sector" (S. Simpson, "Women Entrepreneurs" in J. Cozens and M. West (eds), *Women at Work* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), p. 119).

¹¹⁶ Erwee, "Entrepreneurship", p. 158. See also Goffee and Scase, *Women in Charge*, p. 45.

¹¹⁷ Elizabeth Murray, Interview, 16 June 1993.

money, it was generally obtained through informal channels¹¹⁸ - through a legacy, through cashing in a pension, finding a sleeping partner, through a divorce settlement, and from savings.¹¹⁹ Only one of the women interviewed had acquired funds from the formal banking sector, and even then only because her parents stood surety:

I got from Standard Bank but my parents, without them I couldn't have done it. They stood surety, I didn't have anything, I had a crock of a car, I had no assets at all, so I was quite a liability as far as they were concerned.¹²⁰

Despite proclamations of neutrality from the banking sector, and even as they actively encouraged women to take out cheque accounts and credit cards, banks were considered to be unwilling to lend women investment finance.

If you wanted to go to the bank manager and ask for money, then you'd see ... now you are sitting as a woman, you've got nothing, you've got no idea, you own nothing, because your husband owns the house, and you've never done anything. I can't see a bank manager giving me R20,000 and saying here's money for equipment, I'll put my bets on you.¹²¹

Furthermore, *owing* money, whether to a bank or to family and friends, was frequently perceived to be extremely undesirable. "I paid everybody back

¹¹⁸ Of the entrants to South Africa's first Small Business competition, over eighty per cent used either personal capital or personal funds (*Focus* Part 5, No. 4, June 1987).

¹¹⁹ See interviews with the following women: Reinette Camphor, 4 February 1993; Jane Brown, 8 February 1993; Lyn Bryer, 15 June 1993; Deborah Smith, 17 February 1993; Elizabeth Murray, 16 June 1993; Judy Badenhorst, 16 February 1993.

¹²⁰ Lindsay Loggie, Interview, 15 February 1993.

¹²¹ Reinette Camphor, Interview, 4 February 1993.

within the year and that was the most amazing thing about it, not to owe anybody a thing," Angela Swain recalled.¹²² "I started with nothing and have made something," claimed another proudly. "There is no financial backing, I don't owe anybody a brass farthing. Not a cent".¹²³ A woman whose business was funded by a sleeping partner defined success as "getting the company running so that my partner didn't have to put more money in, and then paying back ... that original debt."¹²⁴ Another informant refused to liquidate her business and worked to pay back all her creditors, rather than have unpaid debts on her conscience:

At one point I could have just liquidated, gone bankrupt Last year I worked the whole year just to pay back creditors. And I didn't have to. But when I shut the shop I went around to all the people I owed money to, signed personal sureties with them, and every month I'd go and give. I took a whole year ... R35,000 of creditors And I sold things of mine, I went mad, working, working, working, just to pay everybody back. So it's done now. I don't owe anybody any money any more.¹²⁵

Whatever business women were in, many faced problems as a result of poor financial management skills.¹²⁶ Although problems of access to knowledge about tools or equipment tended to be confined to women in what were

¹²² Angela Swain, Interview, 15 June 1993.

¹²³ Elizabeth Murray, Interview, 16 June 1993.

¹²⁴ Lyn Bryer, Interview, 15 June 1993.

¹²⁵ Deborah Smith, Interview, 17 February 1993.

¹²⁶ A British survey revealed that the lack of business training in finance and accountancy was a bigger problem for female entrepreneurs than raising finance and obtaining property (Clutterbuck and Devine, "Is Entrepreneurship the Way", p. 136).

perceived to be 'male' industries, both they and the women in more traditionally female fields confronted difficulties when faced with the necessity of financial planning and financial controls.

Because, historically, financial matters had tended to be the responsibility of husbands, several of these women had little experience of handling money, and struggled to deal with the financial aspects of running a business. Deborah Smith had reached the point of bankruptcy partly because she had never had to worry about money, and because she had never had to learn how to control or organise finances. She had been married to an extremely wealthy man, and financed her first business, a shop selling gifts for children, with a loan against her house. Within a year she faced bankruptcy:

Well, I was lucky. I came out of my divorce with a house so I was able to get a bond on that. I was really thinking in terms of telephone numbers financially in those days. I would have been better off if I had not had these vast facilities, or if I'd been forced to scrimp and save, like I do now. Basically I lost from the beginning because I had so much money I had a house and what did I do? I took out about R120,000 on the house and suddenly you are sitting with R120,000 in your account to go and spend. You buy things for the shop. You just buy, buy, buy. It's not - it was too frivolous, too easy, and that way you lose. [I lost] probably all of that.¹²⁷

Most of the women felt that they lacked the financial knowhow to run a business, that their accounting or bookkeeping skills left a lot to be desired, at least initially. Nonetheless, necessity taught fast: "you have to pick it up as you go along ... you find it out."¹²⁸ The methods used would not always find approval with an accountant, but they were effective: "I've got a red column, a

¹²⁷ Deborah Smith, Interview, 17 February 1993.

¹²⁸ Reinette Camphor, Interview, 4 February 1993.

blue column, a green column ... and in my head I know exactly what's going on."¹²⁹

Lyn Bryer, a publisher, confronted the same problem:

I didn't have any business planning like financial planning skills, and I can't read a bank balance or a balance sheet. I didn't [learn] at the beginning because my partner insisted that he would handle that, and he wouldn't OK the money and the time to go off and do a course. I've learnt since then. In my own way.¹³⁰

On the other hand, there were women who simply did not allow the financial side of their business to worry them. Deborah Smith deliberately confined her home furnishing business to cash in order to obviate the need for bookkeeping:

I'm in business as such, but I'm not a business woman by any means. My strengths are in being creative ... when it comes to admin or bookkeeping or anything like that I'm not interested Budgeting and financial planning would have helped me a lot more ... I don't have any accounts, and I buy everything for the business, I pay cash and people pay cash to me and nobody ever says I'll pay you next week ... so I don't have a cash flow problem I don't know exactly how much I make, but I just know at the end of the month I'm still putting food on the table.¹³¹

While minimising costs and debt seemed to be a priority of these women, making vast sums of money seemed to be less important. As Deborah Smith explained, "I'm not just working for the money, I'm working for personal

¹²⁹ Judy Badendorst, Interview, 16 February 1993.

¹³⁰ Lyn Bryer, Interview, 15 June 1993.

¹³¹ Deborah Smith, Interview, 17 February 1993.

satisfaction".¹³² A number of analysts have observed that women's businesses tend to generate lower profits and sales than male-owned and run concerns.¹³³ While factors such as differential access to investment funding, different work experiences and skills play a part in explaining the lower monetary earnings of women, it also appears that women themselves do not define their ambitions purely in financial terms.¹³⁴ Several studies indicate that non-economic incentives are important factors in understanding both why women start businesses and how they run them.¹³⁵ The present study, while small, similarly suggests that there is substance to the claims of those who maintain that profit-making is only one of several aims in starting a business from home.¹³⁶ Several of the women in this study agreed that they could earn more doing something else, but that they preferred to do what they were doing and earn less. "I don't really get paid what I would get if I went and did a job".¹³⁷ Lyn Bryer turned down an offer of employment that would have given her more money:

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ See, for example, K. Loscocco, J. Robinson, R. Hall and J. Allen, "Gender and Small Business Success: An Inquiry into Women's Relative Disadvantages", *Social Forces* Vol. 17, No. 1, 1991, p. 71.

¹³⁴ Loscocco et al ignore this dimension of women's business ownership, preferring to define small business success purely in financial terms (*ibid.*).

¹³⁵ See, for example, S. Cromie, "Similarities and Differences Between Women and Men Who Choose Business Proprietorship", *International Small Business Journal* Vol. 5, No. 3, 1987.

¹³⁶ See Goffee and Scase, *Women in Charge*, pp. 54-57, 98-133 and Cromie, "Similarities and Differences", p. 56. Erwee also notes that female entrepreneurs tend to place high priorities on personal issues (Erwee, "Entrepreneurship", p. 157).

¹³⁷ Deborah Smith, Interview, 17 February 1993.

It was quite a struggle for many years, but when it started to do better, then I got a better salary. It wasn't what I could get in publishing I was head-hunted by a company in Johannesburg for R8,000, and I certainly don't earn that ... and a car.¹³⁸

For most of those interviewed, it was the freedom to write their own job description, to determine their own hours of work, and to be creative, that was more important than earning large sums of money. "Working for yourself gives you a wonderful freedom."¹³⁹ Those who had worked, at least for a time, in the formal business world, felt that its hours of work were a major burden. As Lyn Bryer explained:

I now have ideas about how much nicer it is to work as a free human being, not have every sort of minute watched over, clocking in ... feeling guilty about a personal call. I never feel guilty at all, whatever I do, even if I take a day off to go to an art gallery or a sale, it's just my life now, I can do what I like. Because I know that I'll make up the time, it's no problem.¹⁴⁰

Judy Badenhorst, describing the advantages of running her own business, expressed very similar sentiments. "I think it's the freedom. You know, you can come and go as you like, you don't have to clock in."¹⁴¹

And yet all these women had worked extremely long hours, far longer than the hours required by a regular job, particularly when they were trying to establish their businesses.¹⁴² Reinette Camphor remembered

¹³⁸ Lyn Bryer, Interview, 15 June 1993.

¹³⁹ Reinette Camphor, Interview, 4 February 1993.

¹⁴⁰ Lyn Bryer, Interview, 15 June 1993.

¹⁴¹ Judy Badenhorst, Interview, 16 February 1993.

¹⁴² Several research projects indicate that self-employed people work longer hours than those who are otherwise employed. For example, see C. Mason, S.

how hard she had worked when her business was new: "Initially I worked very hard ... I was there all day, every day, full day and Saturdays".¹⁴³ Lyn Bryer was another who recalled spending many hours a day trying to establish her publishing company:

I wouldn't like to work all night any more, I try to stop at five or six o'clock in the evening. I used to work right through, many times till the early hours of the morning. Then I'd work on public holidays, on Saturdays and Sundays, I never had any time off because those were quiet times for me when I could work at home.¹⁴⁴

Lindsay Loggie remembered how her new restaurant dominated her life after she had left the hotel business. For five years she worked "anything from twelve through to fifteen hours a day. But I didn't mind, somehow you didn't feel over-laboured ... you always have that extra energy coming from somewhere, that driving force, that was yourself really. It's amazing where it comes from."¹⁴⁵

Angela Swain found that, as a furnisher, her working hours were seasonal:

At the moment [I work] from about eight to five thirty, sometimes as late as seven, sometimes I bring work home to do the accounts or whatever ... and then from August I really start pushing in the hours, then it's like seven o'clock, six

Pinch and A. Storey, "Self Employment in a British City", *International Small Business Journal* Vol. 10, No. 1, 1991, p. 36; Goffee and Scase, *Women in Charge*, p. 33.

¹⁴³ Reinette Camphor, Interview, 4 February 1993.

¹⁴⁴ Lyn Bryer, Interview, 15 June 1993.

¹⁴⁵ Lindsay Loggie, Interview, 15 February 1993.

o'clock in the morning ... and I'll go home seven or eight, and I'll work every single day and I'll work on Saturdays and occasionally on Sundays.¹⁴⁶

The difference was that they were working for themselves and able to determine their own priorities. The flexibility and satisfaction of being one's own boss more than compensated for the costs involved. And, of primary importance for those with children, the total number of hours worked mattered less than the fact that they could fit their work around their children rather than *vice versa*.¹⁴⁷

Formal employment, combined with persistent ideas of just whose responsibility children were, alongside enduring conceptualisations of what constituted 'good' mothering, left women with children balancing on a mental tightrope. Those who had worked away from home remembered struggling with industrial capitalism's dichotomy of home and work: "The conflict of trying to be successful in business and a good ... mother, there's always that conflict."¹⁴⁸ Lyn Bryer recalled that when she had been employed full-time it had been "horrific, still trying to run your home after a full day's work."¹⁴⁹ Although she initially tried to maintain the separation of work and home by starting her publishing business in premises away from home, she soon chose to reintegrate the two:

¹⁴⁶ Angela Swain, Interview, 15 June 1993.

¹⁴⁷ While Erwee's analysis of the entrants to the Small Business Woman of the Year competition indicated that only half had dependent children, over thirty per cent of the entrants were older than forty five years of age and may have had dependent children when they started their business (Erwee, "Entrepreneurship", p. 157).

¹⁴⁸ Deborah Smith, Interview, 17 February 1993.

¹⁴⁹ Lyn Bryer, Interview, 15 June 1993.

I had at first shared the premises with other people ... in Diep River. Then I decided to get another computer and bring it home, and I prefer working here because I get that sort of flexi-time option whereby the kids can come home and I can give them attention, and I can make meals and I can shop, you know at easier hours.¹⁵⁰

Judy Badenhorst pointed out that despite the long hours she had worked when her children were small, she could drop everything to be with her children when she felt they needed her:

I still cooked jam, sometimes I'd cook till midnight, and a couple of times I fell asleep when the jam was boiling I would be at home cooking jam four days a week and then working at the farmstall on Friday and Saturday morning ... and then my children would say 'Mummy, Mummy' ... I used to put everything down and pack a picnic and take off ... have a little picnic.¹⁵¹

Thus, while there were young children to be cared for, businesses tended to be deliberately home-based. Even when children grew older, they still played a part in influencing the running of the business. A woman whose youngest child was almost a teenager remembered explaining to an estate agent the kind of premises she was looking for in order to establish her shop:

I went to an agent, he took me to two or three places that were in the market ... and then he said to me 'But what do you actually want?' So I said I would really like that shop, because it's near to my children's school.¹⁵²

While these women clearly considered 'good' mothering to require their presence, several also considered that their children derived additional benefits

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Judy Badenhorst, Interview, 16 February 1993.

¹⁵² Reinette Camphor, Interview, 4 February 1993.

from home-based working mothers, that there were advantages for children in seeing their mothers work and from being involved to a greater or lesser extent with the business. Watching their mothers run businesses helped inculcate particular values in children:

I think it's actually an investment in them in a way You know if you are working towards something ... and I think they've also got that. Now one son is planting herbs and he made R600 out of one little bit of basil that he had.¹⁵³

Deborah Smith felt that her children had learned a lot from her home-based business.

I think it's a very positive thing, because they watch you on a practical level working for money, and I think they're learning great lessons ... [in] creativity ... I found them doing things that are similar... they would take little bits of fabric and ... their whole concept of decorating and colour is a lot more advanced than other children.¹⁵⁴

She firmly believed that her children acquired valuable skills simply by being present when she dealt with customers and clients. Her children knew "all my wholesalers and my suppliers" and were learning how to conduct business negotiations, how to interact with clients and customers and how to calculate profits. "If I were doing a job out there they wouldn't really learn."¹⁵⁵

Although women's roles had changed in a variety of ways since the early 1960s, the distinction between who was *responsible* for tasks remained. Men who

¹⁵³ Judy Badenhorst, Interview, 16 February 1993.

¹⁵⁴ Deborah Smith, Interview, 17 February 1993.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

changed nappies were appreciated for *helping* their wives fulfil their duties.

Wives who earned money merely *helped* their husbands execute their financial obligations. Judy Badenhorst explained this very clearly:

Any woman working has still got to do all the other things, she's got to do the washing and ironing and see there is food in the house and the children are all right and everyone has been to the dentist, all those sort of things. And the man does a straight job. I mean he has the worry, you see, the financial worry.¹⁵⁶

Thus many who were married or had been married continued to subscribe to the belief that "[e]verything the woman wants, he's got to pay for. Her car, he's got to pay for her clothes, he's got to pay for her cosmetics."¹⁵⁷

Research indicates that even if women work, even if they earn as much as or more than their husbands, gender roles fail to alter substantially. Hertz points to the double standards applied to working men and women:

She is always expected to care for the children. If she works outside the home it is an additional income but if she substitutes a paid worker or day care center it is an added expense. By contrast, if he works outside the home he is not expected to repair the car engine but if he does it is an added saving.¹⁵⁸

It was the women who had no children or who had older children who entered the more 'adventurous' fields, in terms of financial investment, such as

¹⁵⁶ Judy Badenhorst, Interview, 16 February 1993.

¹⁵⁷ Reinette Camphor, Interview, 4 February 1993.

¹⁵⁸ R. Hertz, "Financial Affairs: Money and Authority in Dual Earner Marriage" in Lewis et al, *Dual Earner Families*, p. 140.

restaurants or shops.¹⁵⁹ It was the absence of domestic responsibilities that freed Jane Brown to enter the unusual field of violin making. She believed that having children and a husband would have prevented her resigning from her secure job as a librarian. "Because I'm single, I don't have any responsibilities you know, if I'd had children then I would probably not have done it, but I've only got myself to look after."¹⁶⁰

The enduring conceptualisation of responsibilities as gender-specific meant that these women considered men to be more focused on their businesses than women were on theirs. "They have a much better ability to be single-minded, and they have the opportunity of being single-minded about it They can walk, talk and live that business with the sole object of money at the end."¹⁶¹ Describing this phenomenon in jargonistic terms that concealed gender hierarchies, Rudd et al explained that "[f]or women the demands of the family role are permitted to intrude into the work role more than the work role is allowed to interfere with family roles, whereas for men the opposite is true The boundary between work and family is asymmetrically permeable."¹⁶²

In support of this, an informant argued that women were far less single-minded than men:

¹⁵⁹ Interviews with Reinette Camphor, 4 February 1993 and Lindsay Loggie, 15 February 1993.

¹⁶⁰ Jane Brown, Interview, 8 February 1993.

¹⁶¹ Deborah Smith, Interview, 17 February 1993.

¹⁶² N. Rudd and P. McKenny, "Family Influences on the Job Satisfaction of Employed Mothers", *Psychology of Women Quarterly* Vol. 10, 1986, p. 364.

Women go off at a tangent ... you've got work to do, but along the way you're chatting to this client and helping somebody with this and that, and distractions, children, housework, I mean there is just so much else that - and we allow it Most women ... allow themselves to be distracted, they want to be distracted, they want to care.¹⁶³

Men's ability to focus on their businesses without the distraction of domestic obligations was perceived to enable them to operate differently, in a way that was considered undesirable for women. Several of these small businesswomen saw distinctions between the way in which women organised and ran their businesses and the way in which men organised and ran theirs. There was perceived to be more competition between men and more co-operation between women:

I think that women are much easier to deal with. I think that there is a certain dishonesty amongst males. They are so busy trying to impress each other that they actually overlook the issues at hand, in the business, at the mine face.¹⁶⁴

Lyn Bryer agreed:

I think that men are more competitive and women network more, so I think I've enjoyed getting to know other small publishers, which a man might not have done I think that they [women] get on with people, whereas men regard them as rivals. They are commercial peers, I see them as, not as rivals, they are friends and publishers.¹⁶⁵

Goffee and Scase make the point that while, for some women, self-employment implies the rejection of traditional family and domestic roles, for others working

¹⁶³ Deborah Smith, Interview, 17 February 1993.

¹⁶⁴ Elizabeth Murray, Interview, 16 June 1993.

¹⁶⁵ Lyn Bryer, Interview, 15 June 1993.

from home is a way of accommodating these roles.¹⁶⁶ It seems clear that the majority of the women interviewed in the present study started working from home precisely because their identification with, and internalisation of, the patriarchal norms described earlier was so strong. That child care and building a home was their responsibility was accepted without question by those with children.

The idea, based on their lack of domestic commitments, that men were able to operate differently, extended to women's perceptions of their own businesses as a haven *apart from* and separate to the competitive business world. Individual women starting their own businesses perceived themselves to be constructing and operating in a feminised business environment where stereotypically female values of caring and sharing were primary, where negotiation and collaboration replaced confrontation and animosity:

I always look at it, a man goes out to work and he works out there in the field or in the - to me it's like a jungle where they work, you know, its like the real world as opposed to my work which is a protected world ... [my work] is pretty and it's music and it's nice things and it's the flower sellers outside, and I sell pretty things and people come there to be nice, they don't come in to fight about the interest rates, you know, that's the real world.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Goffee and Scase, *Women in Charge*, pp. 42-43. Tivers observed that the nature of women's employment tended "to reinforce the traditional division of labour by sex and the female responsibility for domestic and child care duties." (J. Tivers, *Women Attached: The Daily Lives of Women With Young Children* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 256.)

¹⁶⁷ Reinette Camphor, Interview, 4 February 1993.

It seems that some female entrepreneurs at least, are reluctant to identify with the world of paid work, characterised as it is, both in their own minds and by the media, as rude, commercial and aggressive. Instead, for women, the sheltered, affection-based, group values typically ascribed to the family are translated into a business environment, seemingly transforming that environment into something other than the stereotypically harsh business world. The owner of a home-based decorating/design business, reinforced this idea of a dichotomy between 'out there' and 'in here' when she identified a distinction between women working from home and those working in the formal business world. "There's a big difference in women in business working from home and women in business out there."¹⁶⁸ Most of the women interviewed felt that the business world was competitive and stressful. They considered that what they were doing represented a movement away from this kind of environment, that women's businesses were more people-oriented in the sense that others in the same kind of business were colleagues rather than rivals.

In a similar fashion, those women who employed others appeared to run their businesses along less authoritarian lines and to have less hierarchical structures than traditionally male-run operations.¹⁶⁹ Several of the women were proud that they treated their staff differently to the way they had been treated as employees in men's businesses, and emphasised that the opinions of their staff were sought and valued. Elizabeth Murray explained:

¹⁶⁸ Deborah Smith, Interview, 17 February 1993.

¹⁶⁹ This kind of behaviour has also been observed elsewhere. See, for example, Clutterbuck and Devine, "Is Entrepreneurship the Way Ahead for Women?", p. 137; Goffee and Scase, *Women in Charge*, p. 69.

Two things matter to me the very most in my business I hate the destruction of the environment, so we are using alien vegetation to make paper The other is that I thought if I could employ people in South Africa, I don't pay them high salaries, but all my staff are asked for opinions.¹⁷⁰

Furthermore, working hours were more flexible. There was less emphasis on time-keeping and more on getting the job done: if the job was finished early, employees could leave. Elizabeth Murray described her philosophy towards time-keeping:

They are not watched over. I never get to work before they do ... I never check up when they come in, I never check up when they go, they know more or less the hours they are supposed to work They know if we've got a rush on, to work overtime, and if we are very quiet they can leave early, and I don't check on it.¹⁷¹

Angela Swain also emphasised that her employees were not required to submit to strict time disciplines:

I do look after my staff incredibly well ... they produce the work It's a happy environment, it's not a sweatshop, they work very, very hard, but it's not ring-bell-clock-in-card etc etc. I've been in workshops where there's a timer, and I'm sorry, I can't deal with that. When the work must be done it's done ... and that is the most important thing.¹⁷²

The focus on task completion rather than fixed working hours links up with E.P. Thompson's observations on the changed conceptualisation of time associated

¹⁷⁰ Elizabeth Murray, Interview, 16 June 1993.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Angela Swain, Interview, 15 June 1993.

with industrial capitalism.¹⁷³ For Thompson, the conceptualisation of time as currency is the consequence of the separation of home and work in conjunction with the development of wage labour. Where time is money, working hours are fixed and monitored. For women, according to Thompson, the separation of home and work is shallower, and the sense of time as currency is less pervasive.¹⁷⁴

A community in which task-orientation is common appears to show least demarcation between 'work' and 'life'. Social intercourse and labour are intermingled - the working day lengthens or contracts according to the task.¹⁷⁵

The tendency for women's employees to be subject to more flexible time-keeping disciplines has been recorded by other researchers.¹⁷⁶ This study indicates that the 'intermingling' of work and home is a common feature of women's small businesses. Furthermore, Clutterbuck and Devine cite another study that suggests that female entrepreneurs develop a 'maternal' style of management that contrasts with the male-owned business run along typically authoritarian lines complete with hierarchies, anonymity and rigid bureaucracies.¹⁷⁷ From a study this small it is difficult to determine to what

¹⁷³ E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism", *Past and Present* No. 38, 1967, pp. 61, 79.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁷⁶ Goffee & Scase, *Women in Charge*, pp. 69, 112. See also Clutterbuck & Devine, "Is Entrepreneurship the Way Ahead for Women?", p. 137.

¹⁷⁷ Clutterbuck & Devine, "Is Entrepreneurship the Way Ahead for Women?", p. 137.

extent these 'family' values conceal differential power relationships that may be as exploitative and manipulative as those in the harsh business world.

The transfer of idealised 'family' values into the work place was expressed in a variety of ways.¹⁷⁸ Reinette Camphor, a shop owner, pointed out the interdependent relationship between employer and employee when she discussed her white assistants:

I've been very lucky, I've had the most wonderful staff
Once you've chosen them I think you've got to rely on them,
and they rely on you. My boyfriend always says 'Oh you spoil
your girls', but I think, no, they are everything to me ... they
are my back-up system.¹⁷⁹

This interdependence, based as it was on 'family' values, could entail personal obligations on the part of the employer that some women felt unable or unready to meet.

Once I took on a woman and she was with me for six months
and she chose to leave and after that I chose not to have
anybody else as an assistant, because times come, like when I
was ill, I would have had to say cheerio and I don't like
building up people's hopes.¹⁸⁰

Another felt that while she employed others in order to free her to concentrate on particular aspects of the business, this was unsuccessful precisely because she was unable to act as the 'big boss' at the top of a hierarchy.

¹⁷⁸ According to Clutterbuck and Devine, "[c]ertain values from the home are grafted to a business environment" (*Ibid.*, p. 137). These values tend to be: greater concern with working relationships, less concern with authority and status, and the use of a wider and more flexible range of abilities than male entrepreneurs (*Ibid.*, p. 138).

¹⁷⁹ Reinette Camphor, Interview, 4 February 1993.

¹⁸⁰ Lyn Bryer, Interview, 15 June 1993.

I'm not very good at delegating and being strict with them and I found that I was doing what they should be doing. Because I didn't enjoy being the big boss to them. It's not my scene.¹⁸¹

If the idealised 'family' value system imported into the business world applied to relationships with employees and competitors, it was also important in dealings with customers and clients. Several women believed that the roots of their business success lay in their emphasis on the 'personal touch', on the strength of their personal relationships with customers: "I've hit a market where people want service, and they want *you* and when they phone me I'm there, I'd just drop everything and I'd go."¹⁸² Lindsay Loggie had opened a second restaurant after the success of her first, and believed this to be a mistake:

The thing is ... it's you they want to see, you become [the restaurant] Wherever I am that's the shop that does the best at the time. Hear it time and time again, we went to [the restaurant] and you weren't there.¹⁸³

She continued by describing her relationships with her customers:

They come in to talk There are people with real problems and they come and they don't know who else to talk to and they feel that they can talk to you and they are not going to be put aside, you will listen.¹⁸⁴

Several women whose businesses were established found themselves reluctant to expand as this could jeopardise the 'personal touch' that had made their

¹⁸¹ Deborah Smith, Interview, 17 February 1993.

¹⁸² Angela Swain, Interview, 15 June 1993.

¹⁸³ Lindsay Loggie, Interview, 15 February 1993.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

businesses successful in the first place. Lindsay Loggie pointed out that she would not have two restaurants again precisely because the personalised flavour was lost. "I wouldn't do it again though I would have the one slightly bigger".¹⁸⁵ Angela Swain explained that "I don't want to get big" because it would mean she could not be there for her customers.¹⁸⁶

Others rejected the idea of growth for different reasons. For Lyn Bryer it was because expansion would turn her into an administrator: "And for me I wanted to stay doing the interesting things, and [expansion], that becomes sort of managerial, lots of people and running meetings all day."¹⁸⁷ Deborah Smith felt that the point of running her own business was to be with her children, and that enlarging her business while they were small would be pointless, even if it meant more money, although it remained a possibility for the future.

There've been opportunities and times and ideas that I've had, to expand what I'm doing ... but so what? I might as well be out having a management position and flying all over the world and never seeing my children ... when one's children are growing up doing something for yourself from home, something creative from the heart, puts food on the table, but it doesn't give you overseas trips ... knowing that when your children are older maybe you could still expand it.¹⁸⁸

While making the most money possible was undesirable in terms of the costs to other family-based goals, money was still deemed to be important. Not only did it provide for the necessities of life, it was also perceived to provide security

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Angela Swain, Interview, 15 June 1993.

¹⁸⁷ Lyn Bryer, Interview, 15 June 1993.

¹⁸⁸ Deborah Smith, Interview, 17 February 1993.

and independence. Financial independence was important for Reinette Camphor, who had first been widowed and then divorced, because

[i]t gives one a feeling of power It is important, because I think that guys have a power struggle with you ... a lot of times, and I think it's nice to feel that they don't own you, that you are free to make your own decisions, your own choices. I think that's very nice.¹⁸⁹

Angela Swain, while not discounting marriage in the future, felt that

I'd look at it [marriage] very carefully, because I don't want to rely on anyone for financial security. I don't want to, especially in a marriage, have to ask 'please darling, will you give me fifty cents?'. That would actually kill me.¹⁹⁰

Deborah Smith said that even if she married again she would never give up her business:

I was very depressed while I was married, the marriage was difficult and I gave all my energy to my ex-husband's business and I didn't get rewarded for it I got no recognition, no feedback, and nothing, nothing to show for my effort When I went into this, although it hasn't made me a lot of money, it has given me such recognition and pleasure and the creative side of me is just permanently well-fed and I get so excited.¹⁹¹

Owning and running a business, in conjunction with the financial freedom that this entailed, was perceived to have changed these women. Elizabeth Murray pointed out that it had helped her understand the broader economy:

It's made me economically aware ... it's made me aware of structuring businesses, of figures when people talk business,

¹⁸⁹ Reinette Camphor, Interview, 4 February 1993.

¹⁹⁰ Angela Swain, Interview, 15 June 1993.

¹⁹¹ Deborah Smith, Interview, 17 February 1993.

I'm much better tuned into the economy of the country, what they talk about minimum wages and rent structures and that sort of thing.¹⁹²

Angela Swain felt that change was more internal:

Well, I'm more secure, I know exactly what I want and what I don't want. Inner peace. I'm very, very happy and very content, much calmer.¹⁹³

Lyn Bryer commented that having your own business "makes you much more confident."¹⁹⁴ Judy Badenhurst felt that "I think probably you become more assertive, I'd hate to think I was a hard person, but you do know what you want."¹⁹⁵ The experience of running their own business, of being in charge of their own time and money, of writing their own job descriptions, meant that several felt they could never be an employee again. As Deborah Smith remarked, with little sign of regret, "I would say I'm unemployable now."¹⁹⁶ This was partly because they felt they would be unable to tolerate the typical impersonal, time-focused working practices of the business world, and partly because the experience of working for themselves was so fulfilling.

If these women felt that establishing a small business had changed them in a variety of ways - that they were more assertive, more confident, more relaxed - in some fundamental aspects very little had changed. All agreed that marriage and motherhood were desirable and natural. Those who had been married felt

¹⁹² Elizabeth Murray, Interview, 16 June 1993.

¹⁹³ Angela Swain, Interview, 15 June 1993.

¹⁹⁴ Lyn Bryer, Interview, 15 June 1993.

¹⁹⁵ Judy Badenhurst, Interview, 16 February 1993.

¹⁹⁶ Deborah Smith, Interview, 17 February 1993.

that they would marry again - "yes, I think I would".¹⁹⁷ Those as yet unmarried appeared to have taken no deliberate decision to remain single, even expressing surprise that they had not already married. "I always would have liked to [marry], I never dreamed for a minute that I'd get to thirty six and be single, I just never saw myself like that somehow".¹⁹⁸ No sentiments were voiced to indicate that they would prefer to remain single, and only one believed she would continue with her business if she remarried.¹⁹⁹ Indeed, one informant looked forward to the prospect of being supported by a husband in the future: "I'd be quite happy not to work I wouldn't carry on with my business".²⁰⁰

Conclusion

Women's entry into self-employment could be considered as a means of overcoming the prejudices and biases of male employers in the formal sector. The continued existence of discriminatory practices in terms of opportunities for advancement, differentials in pay or grading levels, as well as inadequate or inappropriate training, all serve to prolong the conspiracy against female workers. Furthermore, as long as both men and women agree that child care is

¹⁹⁷ Lyn Bryer, Interview, 15 June 1993.

¹⁹⁸ Lindsay Loggie, Interview, 15 February 1993.

¹⁹⁹ Deborah Smith, Interview, 17 February 1993.

²⁰⁰ Angela Swain, Interview, 15 June 1993. While Angela Swain wanted marriage and "a horde of children", she also made it clear that she would not like to have to ask for housekeeping money. Her future husband would be expected to put a lump sum aside for her: "something must be put in the bank on day one, you know, this is yours".

women's work, female employees will be handicapped. As long as child care remains the individual women's duty, as opposed to a parental or social obligation, women employees will continue to suffer discrimination. Starting one's own business is a response, firstly, to discrimination in the work place, and secondly to socially constructed gender roles decreeing children to be women's problem, women's duty and women's fulfilment.

But if self-employment is a response to the different treatment and the different responsibilities for white South African women, it is not a revolution. This study, of a small sample of women, suggests that those who start up their own businesses may do so as a means of overcoming the discrimination against them in the male business world, but they do this in order to perpetuate the gendered roles that provide the foundations for that discrimination in the first place. Not one of these women saw marriage as undesirable, not one saw women's full responsibility for child care as undesirable. If those who were single, whether widowed, divorced or unmarried, felt they would carry on their businesses once married, it was largely because it was felt that this would make them better able to carry out the duties assigned to them within marriage. And it is in the social construct of marriage and motherhood that the seeds of subordination and discrimination lie, in notions of 'proper' behaviour for men, women and children. Those, in this study, who had husbands, constructed clear distinctions between wives' and husbands' duties; those without husbands firmly believed that they would marry (again) in the future, implying acceptance of such distinctions. Women who start up their own business may do so to evade male control in the work place, but their anger is directed at male controls that prevent them from fulfilling their 'female' duties. Women who start up small

businesses do so in order to accommodate their gendered roles, not to overthrow them.

Conclusion

In 1960, early marriage, swiftly followed by pregnancy and a life of domesticity, was represented as the over-riding ambition of most white women. In 1990, white South African society still expected its young women to marry and accept existing gender hierarchies. Most white women conformed. For the women interviewed in this study, the institution of marriage remained as desirable in 1990 as it had in 1960.¹ Those who had never married had taken no deliberate decision to avoid matrimony, and hoped to marry in the future. Those who had been widowed while still young had married again. Divorcees who had experienced unhappy marriages had either remarried or anticipated remarrying.

But by 1990, while most white women still had aspirations towards wifehood, they were generally more inclined to wait until they were approaching thirty years of age. And if matrimony remained desirable for white women, by 1990 it no longer signalled the end of paid employment in their lives. Substantial changes had occurred in the meaning of the concept. The notion that all married women could and should be supported by their husbands disintegrated over the course of the 1970s and early 1980s, until by 1990, the working wife was as common as she had been rare in 1960.

If the years between 1960 and 1990 saw the institution of marriage adapt to incorporate paid work for wives, change also took place around female fertility.

¹ The number of marriages per 1,000 population was 9.3 in 1960 and 9.1 in 1990 (Central Statistical Services, *Report on Marriages and Divorces 1990* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1992), pp. 1-2).

Marriage and conception were virtually synonymous during the 1960s, the latter following rapidly upon the heels of the former. By 1990, not only were white women delaying marriage: they were also less eager to become mothers the moment they became wives, and less enthusiastic about having large numbers of children. By 1990, marriage no longer meant, as it had in the 1960s, "permanent retirement [from the labour force] somewhere between the honeymoon and the first baby shower".² In the context of increasingly sophisticated birth control methods and changed formulations of ideal family size, greater numbers of women were having fewer children. If pregnancy still meant that many left the labour force, most returned as their children grew a little older.

If socially sanctioned ideals regarding family size had changed, and while marriage no longer required a woman to devote her lifetime to crushing her own ambition, less change was evident on the domestic front.³ The vast majority of wives, employed or not, remained and remain responsible for the day-to-day running of the home. In South Africa, to an even greater extent than in many metropolitan societies, the institution of domestic service allows husbands to evade domestic responsibilities. But even in the absence of a servant, most husbands remain resistant to sharing the housework, and working wives without domestic servants typically merely double their burden.

² B. Ehrenreich and D. English, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women* (London: Pluto Press, 1979), p. 257.

³ A report summarising British research states that "[m]en of the 90s are no better than their 50s predecessors, still shunning all tasks around the home and leaving the women holding the babies" (*Weekend Argus* 8/9 January 1994).

If domestic arrangements survived with minor changes, the conventional beliefs surrounding motherhood proved to be even more intransigent. Between 1960 and 1990, women's obligations for child care and nurturing remained intact. Throughout this period, mothers, not fathers, were allocated prime responsibility for the care and nurture of children. Nonetheless, the methods adopted by women to fulfil those obligations showed signs of change. In 1960, the birth of a child entailed a full-time commitment from most mothers for the next twenty years. By 1990, a mother's dedication to her children no longer required expression in her full-time presence. The increasing number of creches, nursery schools, and day care centres around the country bore witness to both the increased number of employed mothers, as well as the acceptance, born of necessity, of mothering substitutes for part of the time.

In 1960, South Africa saw very few white married women employed outside the home. Over the course of the 1960s, wives began slowly creeping into the labour force, often encouraged by women's organisations fighting male rules preventing women from taking up paid employment. In the context of a booming economy and a perceived shortage of skilled white labour, the employment of wives and mothers was promoted by elements within the state, big business and white trade unions, aiming to protect and enhance white male supremacy. The 1960s then, saw women beginning to breach the socially constructed barriers defining paid work as inappropriate for wives and mothers.

These changes gathered pace from the early 1970s. By the mid-1970s, in the context of global recession following the oil crisis, combined with domestic political and economic turmoil, barriers tumbled one after another. Large numbers of white women swept into the work force and stayed there after

having snared a husband. If many continued to enter occupations considered traditional for women, increasing numbers were invading non-traditional fields, becoming lawyers, engineers, accountants and scientists. Over the course of the later 1970s and early 1980s, female employees consolidated their positions in one trade and profession after another, surmounting and demolishing many of the obstacles hitherto erected by convention and custom.

As, over the 1970s and early 1980s, the boundaries defining appropriate employment for men and women partially collapsed, so women's organisations shifted focus. Instead of fighting to open doors to particular careers, as they had during the 1960s, women's organisations concerned themselves with prising open the gateways leading to higher offices and appointments. Women were encouraged to be ambitious, to have careers rather than just jobs.

By the middle of the 1980s, in the face of deepening economic, political and social crisis, further changes in white women's labour force participation could be traced. The adverse economic climate meant that jobs were becoming more scarce; from the mid-1980s there was also increased competition from black workers. If some women had begun to climb work hierarchies, and a few had reached extremely high level positions, the vast majority remained trapped in the lower ranks.⁴ For women interviewed for this study, lower level positions in the workplace were the result of a variety of factors. For some, it was the dearth of suitable opportunities. For others, access to higher positions was

⁴ A survey by *Femina* indicates that "of 41 major companies in South Africa ... only 6.13 per cent of women are in the top three management sectors, and just 20.47 per cent are in the 'skilled' category, the resource base for future managers" (*Femina* November 1993, p. 72).

blocked by the prejudices and biases of male superiors. Yet others found that time spent out of the workplace, bearing and raising children, had affected the skills they had to offer as well as the confidence with which to strive for better positions.

While one of the significant aspects of white women's labour force participation during the 1980s was the tendency for women to remain in the lower levels, another significant feature was the trend towards starting home-based businesses. Reflecting international trends, greater numbers of white South African women began opting out of men's world of work by establishing their own businesses. If the 1960s and 1970s saw white women leaving home to take up paid employment, the 1980s witnessed them returning to the home, bringing paid work with them.

It has been anticipated that women's entry into paid employment would serve to reduce or eliminate gender oppression.⁵ This study indicates that for white South African women, this assumption needs significant modification. In South Africa, women who entered the world of paid work entered a world largely created, defined and maintained by white males. Working women who compete with men compete on what are essentially male terms. Their access to the male business world has been based on meeting the entrance requirements established by overwhelmingly white male authorities. The working hours were set by male precedents and patriarchal traditions; the qualities and skills required to succeed

⁵ See Hartmann for a critique of this analysis (H. Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union" in L. Sargent (ed), *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism* (London: Pluto Press, 1981), pp. 3-11).

had been defined by men; the very notion of 'success', measured in monetary worth, was itself a product of a male value system.⁶ If a few white women surmounted the obstacles placed before them, overcoming the 'deficiencies'⁷ inherent in being born female, many more did not, remaining in the lower levels of structures erected in and by patriarchal custom.

In South Africa, women's entrance into the labour force as paid employees has largely failed to address gender inequalities. Instead, many of those who took up paid employment assumed a double burden, oppressed by two patriarchs, one in the workplace and one in the home. But if paid employment offered little chance for most women to overcome discrimination, it has been argued that self-employment has the potential to provide them with an alternative strategy to escape gender subordination.⁸ Having freed themselves from the domination of male 'bosses', female business owners can allegedly create and define alternative worlds where women themselves set the goals, define the norms and establish their own standards.

⁶ Loscoco et al impose their notion of what constitutes 'success' (profitability indexed to sales) on the small businesses that were the focus of their study. While recognising that "every small business owner may not define success in this way", they chose to adhere to patriarchal definitions of success in measuring men's success relative to women's (K. Loscoco, J. Robinson, R. Hall and J. Allen "Gender and Small Business Success: an Inquiry into Women's Relative Disadvantages", *Social Forces* Vol. 17, No. 1, 1991, p. 71).

⁷ D. Spender, *Man Made Language* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 7.

⁸ Goffee and Scase argue that starting a business "offers an alternative route [to paid employment] for those who wish to escape their conditions of economic and social subordination." (R. Goffee & R. Scase, *Women in Charge: The Experiences of Female Entrepreneurs* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), p. 32.)

This study, while based on a small sample, indicates that this view is both inadequate and mistaken. Women remain handicapped for two reasons. Firstly, whatever their business, they inevitably continue to operate within a larger entrepreneurial world constructed and dominated by men.⁹ It is harder for women to find investment finance; the skills acquired by most women are still considered 'natural' attributes unworthy of high regard or high rewards; social stereotypes of women tend to mitigate against their acceptance into the 'successful' male business world. The very meaning of 'successful' is gender specific: social definitions are underpinned by notions about the sexual division of labour. Men who seldom see their children and cannot boil an egg are considered successful if they make a fortune. A woman would be held in somewhat lower esteem: her failure as a female would reflect on her success as a business person.

Secondly, it is this larger world that continues to define children and child care, the home and home care, as female responsibilities. If the 1960s and 1970s saw the conceptualisations of appropriate tasks for women expand to incorporate paid employment, it did not see appropriate tasks for men begin to encompass housework or child care. Men can typically accept their wives starting home-based businesses precisely because, like part-time work, it allows gender roles to go unchallenged. While economic changes have made it more difficult for men to provide for a woman's every need, both men and women frequently conspire to protect the image of the male breadwinner and the gendered

⁹ Goffee and Scase discuss a few 'radical' business women who minimise their contact with men through using female suppliers, providing services to women (*Women in Charge*, pp. 99-117).

distinctions infused into that concept. Women's earnings tend to go towards luxuries, men's towards necessities. Within marriage, it has been argued, many wives, whether self employed or not, frequently continue to 'service'¹⁰ husbands, allowing many men to focus solely on the role of provider. As Spender observes, within many marriages, "women's time and energy is made available to men."¹¹

Working women's internalisation of the gendered roles prescribed for them by patriarchal society requires the wearing of many hats. Women "don't want to have just one hat on your head that says business", commented Deborah Smith, "you want to be a nurse and a mother and all these various roles that women have to be".¹² But several observed that it was extremely difficult to combine the role of mother and worker, given their acceptance of social definitions of the terms. For men, fulfilling their ascribed role is easier, less contradictory. Being a 'good' husband and father means being a good provider: one hat covers all eventualities.

The women in this study, even those who had deliberately escaped from the discrimination of the male business world, did not represent a significant challenge to male dominance. If industrial capitalism has proved far more flexible than many anticipated, patriarchal systems would seem to be equally

¹⁰ Spender, *Man Made Language*, p. 221.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹² Deborah Smith, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 17 February 1993.

elastic.¹³ The specifics of male dominance may adapt and change in response to changing economic, political or social conditions, but the unequal power relations embodied in white South Africa's particular patriarchal system have remained essentially unaltered between 1960 and 1990.

This study suggests that the primary cause of this is the sexual division of labour that continues to allocate housework and child rearing to women. Women who work, whether for themselves or for someone else, typically retain the responsibility for the smooth running of the household. The 'best' mothers are those who spend as much time as possible with their children - but the 'best' workers are those who escape from the children. And as long as fathers are able to avoid responsibility for the rearing and nurturing of their own children, as long as domestic work and child care is considered to be unimportant 'women's work', as long as women continue to 'service' men, women simply will not have time to compete with men on their terms. Whether in the private realm of the home, or the public domain of paid employment and entrepreneurship, they will remain in the lower levels of hierarchies. Worth, value and status will continue to be measured by men's rules, and men will still be the ones with the time to earn them.

¹³ Bozzoli discusses the way in which different kinds of patriarchal systems have remained intact while being transformed in South African society over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (B. Bozzoli, "Marxism, Feminism and Southern African Studies", *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 9, No. 2, 1983).

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